laura wright

foreword by carol j. adams

the vegan studies project

food, animals, and gender in the age of terror

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THE

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The Vegan Studies Project

FOOD, ANIMALS, AND GENDER IN THE AGE OF TERROR

LAURA WRIGHT

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For the nameless
and in memory of
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CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS ix

FOREWORD, by Carol J. Adams xi

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS xix

INTRODUCTION
Framing Vegan Studies 1

CHAPTER 1
Tracing the Discourse of Veganism in Post-9/11 U.S. Culture 28

CHAPTER 2
Vegan Vampires: The Politics of Drinking Humans and Animals in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Twilight*, and *True Blood* 43

CHAPTER 3
Vegan Zombies of the Apocalypse: McCarthy's *The Road* and Atwood's *The Year of the Flood* 68

CHAPTER 4
Death by Veganism, Veganorexia, and Vegaphobia: Women, Choice, and the Politics of "Disordered" Eating 89

CHAPTER 5
Men, Meat, and Hegan Identity: Veganism and the Discourse of Masculinity 107

CHAPTER 6
The Celebrity Vegan Project: Pamela, Mac, Mike, Ellen, and Oprah 130

CONCLUSION
National and Personal Narratives: Some Thoughts on the Future of Vegan Studies 154

NOTES 175

WORKS CITED 183

INDEX 199

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ILLUSTRATIONS

South Great George's Street, Dublin, Ireland, 2014 xi

Vegetarian Vampires, by Remedios Varo Urango 1

Lisa Simpson, in "Lisa the Vegetarian" *Simpsons* episode 6

Logo for "Feminists for Animal Rights" 14

Lynndie England with prisoner at the Abu Ghraib prison 38

"Making Connections between Foreign and Domestic Enemies," by Tony Peyser 40

Spike and Angel in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* 48

Advertisement for HBO's *True Blood* 58

Jason Stackhouse and Amy Burley feed on Eddie Gauthier in *True Blood* 65

Frank eyes irradiated apples in *28 Days Later* 70

The man and the boy in John Hillcoat's film adaptation of *The Road* 72

Cartoon created by the Vegan Society 103

Vegan police in *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World* 107

Laine Hanson at her confirmation hearing in *The Contender* 111

Still from Padma Lakshmi's Hardee's commercial 120

Pamela Anderson's advertisement for PETA 136

Mike Tyson's Last Chance for Animals billboard in West Hollywood 145

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FOREWORD

Carol J. Adams

Laura Wright has written a fascinating and complex book. She takes some of the insights and methods of my own book *The Sexual Politics of Meat* and extends them, thus offering us an up-to-date, contextual, and politically alert analysis of the cultural positioning of veganism and why this is important.

What do I mean by *methods* in reference to my book and this one? Perhaps the most important thing I accomplished in *The Sexual Politics of Meat* was the approach I took, which assumed the normativeness of vegetarianism while understanding why Western culture refused this recognition.

I approached the subject of vegetarianism believing in its efficacy. Because I had been a practitioner of vegetarianism for fifteen years, I understood from experience that vegetarianism was joyful, delicious, and healthy, as well as an ethical response to an unethical practice, the killing and use of animals. Reorienting the understanding of something considered by the dominant culture to be a "fad," I trusted my own experience and my own reading of cultural practices.

South Great George's Street, Dublin, Ireland, 2014. © 2014 Roger Yates / Vegan Information Project.

I also used feminist theory to situate vegetarianism as a political act and critique that intersected with and augmented feminist resistance. This helped to address the confusion that arises about the nature of vegetarianism. Because vegetarianism is something adopted by individuals, the political aspect of the act is often lost from sight.

Finally, I understood that because the dominant culture was committed, invested, and fulfilled by the consumption of dead animals and "feminized protein" (the term I coined for dairy products and eggs), I had to investigate cultural presentations of vegetarianism with a critical eye. I knew that the culture would resist the vegetarian point of view, though positive leakages would always be found. Thus, there was a joy in harvesting from literature, mythology, and film the feminist-vegetarian traces.

Now comes *The Vegan Studies Project*. Laura Wright's veganism in 2001 set her off on a similar methodological task.

Laura presumes the normativeness of veganism. She trusts her own experience and knows its joyful, delicious, and healthy nature, as well as its refusal of an ethic of killing and using animals. Her approach is intersectional; she recognizes that a feminist perspective is needed to understand the way the dominant culture causes the ethical approach of veganism to disappear. While I looked at utopias, Frankenstein's monster, and feminist-vegetarian themes in novels, Laura examines the post-9/11 culture, which she finds dystopian, apocalyptic, filled with those quintessentially unfulfilled consumers—vampires and zombies.

The frustration I expressed in *The Sexual Politics of Meat* about the discussion of eating disorders and vegetarianism gets the much more thorough, insightful, and devastating analysis Laura provides here. She identifies the cultural distortion of the vegan body: "If a person lies about being vegetarian . . . but eats meat (is an omnivore) or does not eat anything at all (is an anorexic), that person is not really a vegetarian; that person is lying."

When I was writing *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, meat eating and masculinity were linked, but now there is something different—and Laura Wright recognizes this: the heightened post-9/11 reiteration. Since 9/11 we've experienced a new insistence on meat eating and masculinity, confirming Susan Faludi's arguments in *The Terror Dream* (2007) regarding anxious virility after the attacks on the World Trade Center. After 9/11 the media hyped John Wayne–like masculinity, Superman-like male powers, and the hypervirility of rescuers and politicians. Thus we learned that, after the World Trade Center towers fell, the first meal Mayor Rudy Giuliani wolfed down was a sandwich made of "meats that sweat" (Faludi 49).

After September 11, what had once been normalized and naturalized has been destabilized: eating a vegan meal or cooking tofu on a grill (as one beer ad implies) completely wipes out whatever "man points" one has gained. Something truly "normal" and "natural" needs no efforts to recuperate it. Laura's analysis of masculinity and veganism observes the regressive nature of the recent articulations of the meat eating and maleness equation.

I'm thrilled by all the sources Laura has pulled together in this more-than-a-decade project. I imagine the process involved a great deal of incubation. I, too, know something about living with and examining examples and concepts over a long period of time. We should celebrate the time allowed for incubation while walking (or running for Laura). *Why this?* we might ask ourselves when we encounter an outrageous example of the recuperative acts of the dominant culture, such as Burger King's "Manthem" advertisement or PETA's display of Pamela Anderson as a butcher's piece of meat. And

when we trust our own experience, this incubation gives us time to recognize exactly how the dominant culture will find new (and recycled old) ways to resist the feminist-vegan critique.

Finally, I celebrate that Laura restores the absent referent of animals back into veganism. In *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, I proposed that animals are absent referents in three ways: they literally disappear as living animals to become meat; they disappear conceptually when as dead animals they are renamed "pork" or "bacon" or "hamburger"; and finally, they disappear symbolically when their experiences become metaphors for someone else's experience. But Laura has identified a fourth way that animals disappear: they have disappeared from the cultural understanding of veganism. At the heart of veganism is the political and ethical rejection of the use of animals. As discussed in popular media, the focus often is on veganism as a lifestyle choice. Consequently, animals remain absent referents even when we make the decision to act by considering their lives and becoming vegan.

Laura places her project squarely within a post-9/11 world and shows us how we have to understand veganism's evolving reception in the twenty-first century as influenced by the new age of the war of terror that came into being after September 2001.

Just recently, when he was in town, my twenty-five-year-old son, Ben, had two of his college friends over for the weekend. We discussed the impact of the computer on handwriting, journal and diary keeping, and letter writing.

One of the young men said, "It's important to have these kinds of records." He asked, "Wouldn't it be good to know what people wrote in their journals after 9/11?"

I retrieved my journal from that month. I was recovering from a foot operation that kept me either in bed or on a couch, an immobility susceptible to watching television, reading newspapers, and listening to the radio—I was already prepared to be a "consumer" of the news. Bruce was the one driving our sons to school each morning, and that's what he had done the morning of September 11, which to my journal was "Sept. 11. Tuesday. 7:00 a.m." That morning I am lamenting my immobility. Later that day, I wrote: "so tragic—watching as *both* World Trade Centers collapse—disbelief."

I read to the three young men from my journal entry for the next day:

> SEPT. 12. WEDNESDAY. 6:00 A.M.
> What an incredible terrible difference a day makes. I am still barely mobile—but yesterday the unthinkable—the shocking—the devastating—4 planes hijacked—2 crash into the World Trade Towers—to watch in horror—what no movie has ever conceived of—first one tower then the other crumbling to the ground—the flume of concrete dust—pouring down—the streets of NY—how utterly awful—all the people

> trapped—how cruel—then the next one collapses—then—or in between word about the Pentagon—all planes grounded. . . .
>
> Our desire for a narrative—and our only narrative—where is the President—will the President speak—the President's narrative the uniting 'words of wisdom'—ugh—from George W. . . .
>
> Horror—and yet the good that meets the horror.
>
> the "story" that has to be told by the President.

As long as I had this journal out, I thought I would read the entire thing. Ben and his friends leave for their evening; I keep reading. Over the next few days, my September 2001 journal is filled with post-9/11 reflections. I know that there is only so much that words can say, and I feel inadequate to that task. I sense we are already being manipulated by "narratives" and "stories." My writing is raw, filled with my nighttime dreams and my waking frustration at my immobility. I note this feminist fact: "saying how many high heels were left at the World Trade Center when it collapsed—Thinking the women had abandoned them to run—the symbolization of that." On September 12, I heard from Robin Morgan, a leading feminist and author of the 1989 feminist classic *The Demon Lover*, which examines war, sexuality, and terrorism and the relationship with a patriarchal culture. She lived near "Ground Zero" and was letting her friends know she was okay, but she was also immediately responding to the larger issues that she had been studying. These "Letters from Ground Zero" became a part of the afterword when her book was rereleased in December 2001. (The book was already in the publication process when 9/11 happened.)

On Sunday at 11:30 I reflect on my continued passivity due to my recuperation. My partner is ready for me to be mobile; I am, too. I note in my journal how "*American-oriented*" the media is. And "so much *maleness* drips in all this." I am concerned about "jingoism—versus loyalty."

> SEPT. 18. TUESDAY. 6:20
> How not to be depressed—at the change—the sense of *threat*—it is awful. Do we go about "business as usual," as all these full-page ads in the *Times* announce—"we are sorry at the loss—don't worry—our business is up & running." . . .
> The feeling of Bush the Cowboy—riding into the horizon—Washington—Issue—civil liberties.

After describing a dream, I wrote this:

> SATURDAY. FALL EQUINOX. 10:51
> Susan Sontag: "A campaign to infantilize the public." "Those in public office have let us know that they consider their task to be a manipulative

one: confidence-building & grief management. Politics, the politics of a democracy—which entails disagreements, which promotes candor—has been replaced by psychotherapy. Let's by all means grieve together. But let's not be stupid together."

A few pages later:

> Theodor Adorno, Minima Moralia, 1951: "The Loch Ness Monster and the King Kong film are collective projections of the monstrous total State. People prepare themselves for its terrors by familiarizing themselves with gigantic images." . . .
> The model for the World Trade Center, according to Jean Baudrillard, was the perforated I.B.M. punch card.
>
> SEPT. 24. MONDAY. 6:25
> Bruce says [that it's said] generals are always fighting the last war: i.e., using the techniques, assumptions, plans from the last war. . . .
> Bruce—saying—maybe people will see the web of life—the connections among all life—and care more—in this direction—it will awaken them—to the connectedness of life.
>
> SEPT. 25. TUESDAY. 6:12
> So—I can walk again. But it is hard. . . . I want to feel young & athletic again—*slowly*—build up strength. Realize how much my ability—or actually my inability—to walk created a sense of *spiritual* passivity, too.
>
> SEPT. 26. WEDNESDAY. 6:30 A.M.
> Dream—at a meeting—a lot of realtors (readers?). I notice how many realtors are veg. I ask if there has even been a study of this. They are interested. They say they have noticed this—but never pursued it. . . .
> E. [a New York firefighter] called Bruce yesterday. He has been to the World Trade Center site. He said the people inside would not have known the building was collapsing—that it would have *simply* rumbled and then pancaked together.
>
> Also a fire of 2,000° (!) unimaginable—would send a tidal wave of heat before it—scaring—terrible—unbearable heat—this is why people jumped—to escape the heat. . . .
> Also—discussing—would one be selfless in this situation—or would one simply try to escape?

My pen tracks thoughts from the dystopian situation to the utopian hope. At the back of this journal is the outline for a book that became *The Pornography of Meat*. Catalyzed by thoughts about all those high-heeled shoes left on the streets of lower Manhattan, my staccato notes capture the movement of my thoughts:

Heels—Hooves. "Hoofing It."
high heels
& crush videos
high heels & women's situation

I am thinking about a magazine called *Playboar*, which shows pigs in pornographic poses.

> Playboar doesn't situate its pigs within the [conventions] old family farm ways to screen factory farming's treatment of pigs—it doesn't romanticize the past—or seek redemption for the present from the past—
> No it turns to the male sexual economy—the untracked economy (pornography producing more income than regular media production).
> The lies of—or more probably for—the pig farmer aren't about the old ways of viewing pigs, but the old ways of viewing women.

My final entry in that journal, from October 8, Monday, at 7:30, reads: "We don't have memories—we have memories of memories; follow the thread, or create a thread that I can follow out of the labyrinth of this present."

Back in the present of 2014, before Ben and his friends left for their Friday night of socializing, I offered to make waffles for breakfast the next day. Later, one of Ben's friends invited them all to a Saturday brunch "with lots of meat," and Ben could see that his houseguests looked at each other wistfully; they had already committed to waffles at our house, *vegan* waffles at our house. They thought they were giving up abundance and, out of duty, embracing scarcity.

I knew nothing about this encounter but in the morning made buckwheat Belgian waffles, frittatas (baked omelettes made from tofu with asparagus, vegan Canadian bacon, fresh basil, spinach, roasted red pepper, and artichokes), and a hash browns, kale, and "cheese" bake. Hot maple syrup, fresh orange juice, lemonade, coffee, and chai greeted them. They were both surprised and pleased by the festive brunch. When they finished, satiated and happy, there appeared to be no regrets that they had passed on the omnivorous brunch.

In the cultural dyads that adhere to food practices, these young people had assumed that veganism equals sacrifice (scarcity), omnivorous equals entitlement (abundance). Laura Wright's examination of discussions of veganism that categorize it as "extreme" and "restrictive" shows this dualism in practice. It's one of those reversals a dominant culture deploys. Most vegans explain that they are now eating many more foods than they ever did as omnivores.

And isn't one of the implicit messages of the gender codings associated with veganism that it's okay for women to deprive themselves? (Isn't this

something women have been expected to do—deprive themselves for their children, their husbands, as Stephanie Coontz shows in *A Strange Stirring: "The Feminine Mystique" and American Women at the Dawn of the 1960s*?) But *men* depriving themselves, giving up their privilege? How does the dominant culture handle this? Laura's perceptive discussion provides the answer.

In closing, let me offer my own Wrightian attempt at interpretation: Why is tofu so hated? Because it stands in for the vegan, it's a synecdoche: the part recalling the whole, tofu as representative of the negation of the vegan's appetite. Who would want to eat tofu? Well, I would, and all those realtors (readers?) in my dream, and the people whom Laura features in her afterword.

Laura's is a dizzying achievement, recognizing the vegan phobic, the vegan deniers, the nonvegan "vegan," the problematic "hegan," the feminist vegan, the animal activist vegan. Thanks to this work, we now have a new category: the vegan studies–loving vegan. Count me as one!

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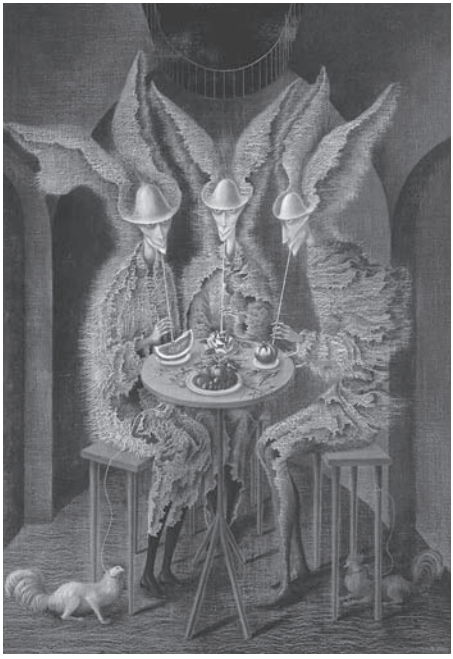
INTRODUCTION

Framing Vegan Studies

This book is my attempt to take a culturally loaded term—"vegan"—and read and deconstruct that identity as it appears in mainstream print and online media, literary texts, film, television shows, and advertising in order to envision, define, and theorize what I am calling vegan studies. I am, therefore, proposing such a field, and I am doing so somewhat in the spirit of play. By placing veganism in the category of study or scholarly inquiry, I am not suggesting that veganism be relegated merely to the realm of study (nor am I suggesting that it has been so relegated); instead, I am indicating that veganism and vegan identity, as well as the popular and academic discourse that constructs those categories, need to be explored, understood, and challenged. I want to tease out several ideas with regard to the nature of what constitutes "studies" (generally, any number of subdisciplinary academic fields that have emerged and been codified since the 1970s) and what constitutes the complicated and contradictory category of "vegan" (at once both identity and practice) in order to imagine what "vegan studies" might look like.



Vegetarian Vampires, by Remedios Varo Urango. From the private collection of Ms. Anna Alexander Gruen.

A "study," quite simply, involves the devotion of time to the acquisition of knowledge about and explication of a subject; "veganism" and "vegan identity," however, are not so clearly and easily defined. The goal of this introduction is thus fourfold: to provide a history of veganism; to define veganism as both an identity category and as a practice in order to read beyond this history into a changed politics of representation; to focus on the significance of that representation within Western culture generally and in post–September 11,

2001, U.S. culture specifically ("vegan" is a Western term, even though a plant-based diet is not solely the purview of the West); and to posit the field of vegan studies as a product of the discourse of vegan representation as situated within and outside of extant conceptions of animal studies, animal welfare/rights/liberation, and ecofeminism.

To be vegan, according to a memorandum of association of the Vegan Society, is to ascribe to a "philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude—as far as is possible and practicable—all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose; and by extension, promotes the development and use of animal-free alternatives for the benefit of humans, animals and the environment. In dietary terms it denotes the practice of dispensing with all products derived wholly or partly from animals." But this definition simplifies the concept of veganism in that it assumes that all vegans choose to be vegan for ethical reasons, which may be the case for the majority, but there are other reasons, including health and religious mandates, people choose to be vegan. Veganism exists as a dietary and lifestyle choice with regard to what one consumes, but making this choice also constitutes participation in the identity category of "vegan." The tension between the dietary practice of veganism and the manifestation, construction, and representation of vegan identity is of primary importance to this study, particularly as vegan identity is both created by vegans and interpreted and, therefore, reconstituted by and within contemporary (non-vegan) media. In order to better understand this tension, it is necessary to examine the history of veganism as both practice and identity and then to read beyond that history into a changed politics of vegan representation that is not reflected in that history.

The History of a Paradox

Tristam Stuart's *The Bloodless Revolution* charts the history of vegetarianism in the West from 1600 to the present as an entity that was named in England in the 1840s and fully codified by the founding of the Vegetarian Society in 1847, the creation of which made "'vegetarianism' a fixed identity—indelibly associated with crankiness" (423), which, in turn, allowed for vegetarianism to be easily "pigeonholed and ignored" (xvii). This codification and naming classified "vegetarian" as a homogeneous entity emptied of intellectual nuance and, therefore, made vegetarianism both easily quantified and dismissed. Such authors as Stuart, Colin Spencer, and Karen and Michael Iacobbo have written various histories of vegetarianism as a dietary sociopolitical discourse with ancient origins, so I do not need to provide an extensive rehashing of those histories here. What I do wish to do, however, is look briefly at the ways these studies posit vegetarianism as a paradoxical ideology and the ways these studies treat veganism within the larger context of vegetarian history.

Stuart's study situates vegetarianism as a philosophy rooted in the ancient past, with the West's "'discovery' of Indian vegetarianism" in the seventeenth century having a basis well before Alexander the Great reached India in 327 BC (40); furthermore, he finds it an "extraordinary coincidence that roughly contemporaneous seminal and Greek philosophers, the Buddha and Pythagoras both taught . . . that it was wrong for people to eat animals" (41). In his exhaustive and meticulously researched work, however, while he utilizes the terms "vegan" and "veganism" throughout, Stuart never examines veganism as a separate identity that may be dependent on factors distinct from those that have influenced the cultural, religious, and social histories of vegetarianism.

What Stuart's work does do, however, is present ethical vegetarianism as a paradox, at once interested in the preservation of life, even as the vegetarian is implicated, like any other living creature, in the cycle of life and death. As a perfect example, he cites Henry Brougham's attack on Joseph Ritson's *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food, as a Moral Duty* (1802) as an indictment of Ritson and those who agreed with his philosophy that animals have a natural right to their existence (362). Brougham claims that Ritson, despite being vegetarian, was nonetheless guilty "of starving calves by drinking milk, aborting chickens by eating eggs, and murdering whole ecologies of microscopic organisms every time he washed his armpits. Even while Ritson was in the act of writing his vegetarian arguments, he was using a quill plucked from a goose, ink made from crushed insects all while lighting his desk with a 'whale-tallow candle'" (368). Brougham, like Darwin, makes explicit the ways that being caught up in the "great chain of life also meant submitting to the great chain of death" (368), noting that preventing killing was not only unnatural and antithetical to the very act of existence but also impossible. In *Vegetarianism: A History*, Colin Spencer likewise points to the tension inherent in the pursuit of a vegetarian ethic: "We do not adequately realize today how deep within our psyche is the reverence for the consumption of meat or how ancient in our history is the ideological abstention from the slaughter of animals for food" (331).

At its core, ethical vegetarianism does embody this paradox, the desire to preserve life even as one's very existence implicates one as caught in the inevitable cycle of life and death; essentially, one cannot live without causing death, and death is the inevitable outcome of being alive. Further, Stuart notes that "Western society has fostered a culture of caring for animals" even as "it has maintained humanity's right to kill and eat them" (xvii), based in large part on the biblical narrative of Genesis, in which God grants human beings "dominion" over the animals. In the service of this paradox, however, the Bible's various dictates have allowed omnivores and vegetarians alike to fashion it into a treatise in support of either tenet; in seventeenth-century England, for example, Thomas Tyron and Roger Crab were both able to twist

"the Bible into a vegetarian manifesto" (61). Furthermore, in 1817 a group that called themselves the Bible Christian Church traveled from Britain to the New World to freely practice their faith, which they based on the Bible, "one bit especially: Genesis chapter one, verses 29–30, which commands that humans eat only herbs and vegetables—a wholly vegetarian diet. This, they maintained, was God's original will" (Linzey ix).

The Bible can be interpreted to support either side of the debate, as can the mythological actions of such cultural exemplars of the vegetarian paradox as Henry David Thoreau. Stuart questions Thoreau's 1845 iconic excursion to Walden Pond, asking, "Was he the peaceful, quasi-Hindu-Pythagorean protector of living things he is often made out to be?" or was he instead "a savage, wild man intent on retrieving from the depths of his psyche man's primeval hunting instincts?" (418). Thoreau did hunt but ultimately opted for a vegetarian existence; nonetheless, Stuart notes that "the tension between predatory instincts and 'altruistic' abstinence stands for a wider struggle of political affiliations" (421) with regard to vegetarianism. Indeed, in the West the tension and debate surrounding whether people should eat animals has been present throughout our history and seems caught in an endless tug-of-war between our biology, our various interpretations of religious and social mythology, and the often-contradictory ethical positions that arise as a result.

However, while within the West "the story has been one of persecution, suppression and ridicule," in the Eastern world, particularly in India and China, as a component of Hindu and Buddhist teachings, "vegetarianism has flourished and numbers millions of converts" (Spencer 331). Colin Spencer's study, like Stuart's, charts vegetarianism's progress across cultures and over vast expanses of time; it likewise notes the ancient nature of what remains a contentious debate with regard to what one chooses to eat. But unlike Stuart, Spencer does devote some analysis to veganism as a category distinct from vegetarianism. He situates the codification of veganism in 1944, when the Vegan Society was founded in Leicester, England. Donald Watson is credited with the creation of the term "vegan," a word made from the first three and last two letters of the word "vegetarian" (293), and vegans separated from the Vegetarian Society, a group that refused to promote veganism, as it found the vegan lifestyle to be both extreme and antisocial (294).

But unlike the dismissal that Stuart claims characterized the codification of the term "vegetarian," in the United States until very recently veganism has remained if not completely devoid of cultural meaning, then at least relatively indefinable by the average American. In 2004, for example, "being a vegan . . . was so weird that pundits listed it as a reason Dennis Kucinich couldn't be the Democratic Presidential nominee. 'People weren't sure if it was another political party or an ethnic group they'd never heard of,' Kucinich says" ("Rise of the Power"). But according to Spencer, "to many then and now

veganism seems the logical outcome of vegetarianism, for in refusing all animal products . . . [vegans] are taking a stand against modern farming and all animal exploitation" (293). Spencer, who even argues that the sixth-century philosopher Pythagoras—the first recorded advocate of a vegetarian lifestyle—was likely vegan (38), views veganism as a "next step forward" and "an ideal to aim at" in the perpetuation of an ethic that seeks to reduce the suffering of animals. He notes that veganism is known both for being the diet "with the lowest report of the common afflictions like cancer and coronary complaints" and also "spiritually ideal in that there is no exploitation of animals by humans" (294).

The competing interests between meat's ancient symbolic and social history and an equally ancient reverence for animal life have shaped the codification of dietary dictates and have established as taboo specific kinds of food for specific people at various points in human history, and these interests remain alive and well within Western culture in the present moment. While vegetarianism and veganism are obviously not the sole purview of Western culture, in this project I am interested in the ways that veganism is socially constructed in the twenty-first-century United States, as veganism has emerged only recently as a major topic in mainstream U.S. discourse about health, environmental concerns, and ethics. And, as Kathy Stevens notes in an article in which she predicts a vegan America by 2050, "in 2012, Americans consumed 12.2 percent less meat than in 2007," and supermarkets and restaurants are changing their offerings to accommodate "not just our attitudes, but our [changing] palates." While veganism does not constitute a unified social movement within the United States, the contemporary conversation about veganism in the United States—particularly as that conversation has taken shape since September 11, 2001—has not only altered our perception of the "Standard American Diet" but also reconfigured our palates and sensibilities in ways that have allowed us to reexamine our relationship with what we eat.

For Spencer, as for many vegans, veganism is an attempt—an "ideal"—to balance the needs of the body with the cultivation of the spirit, but in its pursuit of this ideal, veganism also embodies vegetarianism's paradox in even more profound ways, a truth exemplified in the fourth episode of the twelfth season of the animated sitcom *The Simpsons* called "Lisa the Tree Hugger." The episode features eight-year-old Lisa Simpson, one of the first vegetarian characters to be featured regularly on prime-time television, as she attempts to save Springfield's oldest tree from being cut down.[1] She falls in love with an environmentalist named Jesse Grass and, in an attempt to impress him, tells him that she is vegetarian. Grass scoffs and responds that vegetarianism is a nice start: "I'm a level five vegan. I won't eat anything that casts a shadow." In what constitutes *The Simpsons*' typically astute ability to satirize the social zeit-

geist, Grass's dismissal of Lisa's vegetarianism elevates his veganism as more pure and more aligned with an environmental ethic; in this light, veganism is an arrogant confrontation and a one-upping of a presumed less rigorous (and therefore less serious) vegetarian ideology. But Grass's assertion that he eats nothing that casts a shadow also reveals the infinite regression that characterizes the paradoxical nature of a vegan position as vegans seek to remove themselves from the machinations of social processes and dictates with which they disagree. How far should—and how far can—one go to avoid all supposedly unethical consumption? In order not to eat anything that casts a shadow, one would be unable to eat anything; one would die instead. To be such a vegan is to be disembodied, because if one *is* a body, there is no way to opt out of the cycle of life and death, however much one might try. And if there is no way to avoid implication in the cycle of life and death (which there is not), then vegans, in their quest for the ideal that veganism purports to offer, are perhaps the most paradoxical consumers of all.

Lisa Simpson, from the episode during which Lisa decides to become vegetarian, an earlier episode than the one I discuss. From "Lisa the Vegetarian," *The Simpsons*, season 7, episode 5.

Identity and Practice

As I noted earlier, veganism constitutes both an identity category—like those that constitute race, sexual orientation, national origin, and religion, for example—and a practice dependent upon the eschewing of all animal products from numerous aspects of one's life. Given the nature of its paradoxical status and the fringe position that vegans occupy, what causes some people to become vegan? Consider that veganism has been around for thousands of years and present in vastly different cultures, but veganism has never been the dominant ethical and dietary position in any culture at any time. So what causes people, over vast amounts of time and in decidedly different cultures, to be vegan, particularly given the minority status that such an option has always mandated? Being vegan, no matter where and when, has always constituted a nonnormative position, one that has often inspired persecution. While there has been precious little research about what makes people decide to become vegan, there has been some research that considers that decision either as motivated by an animal-advocacy ethic that is *inherently* manifest in certain people or as a dietary preference influenced by external factors. Bar-

bara McDonald's "'Once You Know Something, You Can't Not Know It': An Empirical Look at Becoming Vegan" examines the experiences of a group of "successful and committed vegans" (19) in order to ascertain why they became vegan. She notes that "becoming vegan represents a major lifestyle change, one that demands the rejection of the normative ideology of speciesism" (3). McDonald's study looks at ethical veganism based on an animal-rights position and identifies a process involving catalytic experiences—such as being exposed to images or literature about the suffering of animals—that lead individuals to seek education about the plight of animals, which then leads to the decision to become vegan. She situates veganism as an activist position in that vegans "reject institutional power by choosing cruelty-free products and by engaging in protests and other activism" (17). What makes McDonald's study provocative are two points that she raises: first, that "most of the participants claimed to have been 'animal people' *all their lives*" (6, my emphasis), and second, that for the participants in this study, the decision to become vegan felt "inevitable," "comfortable," and "final" (15).

In this sense, McDonald reads ethical veganism as a kind of *orientation*—a preexisting condition, if you will—one that is there prior to the potential vegan's ability to act on it through catalytic experiences, education, and information. It is, in this reading, innate. But we tend to consider veganism as a lifestyle *preference* based generally on deeply held beliefs that consuming animals and animal products is wrong. As a result of this belief, one *chooses* not to consume those things, opting instead for a diet and lifestyle that are devoid of such items. In this context, veganism is no more an "orientation" than is purchasing a Honda instead of a Toyota. Again, the terms are paradoxical, positing veganism as orientation even as veganism is a choice made for various reasons. But I want to trouble the notion of what constitutes an "orientation." The third definition of "orientation" that is found in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is the one that pertains to our thinking about sexual orientation (remember that we used to refer to sexual *orientation* as sexual *preference*): "a person's basic attitude, beliefs, or feelings; a person's emotional or intellectual position in respect of a particular topic, circumstance." And "basic" in this sense means "fundamental," or "essential." For one to be "oriented" toward something implies, at least in the case of sexual orientation, an *essential* or *fundamental* position; an orientation, therefore, is something much more deeply rooted than a mere preference. The idea that there is some essential quality in certain people that makes them vegan may seem hokey, and although we should be wary of essentialism, considering veganism as an orientation allows for an understanding of that minority position as a delicate mixture of something both primal and social, a category—like sexual orientation or left- or right-handedness—that constitutes for some people, just perhaps, something somewhat beyond one's choosing. Such a reading, however,

is dependent upon a very selective group of people, all of whom became vegan because of their feelings about animals.

A. Breeze Harper, whose blog, *Sistah Vegan Project*, and whose book, *Sistah Vegan: Black Female Vegans Speak on Food, Identity, Health, and Society*, chronicle the experiences of black female vegans, troubles the notion of orientation by positing that "the culture of veganism is not a monolith and is composed of many different subcultures and philosophies throughout the world" ("Going Beyond" 158). Furthermore, she acknowledges that people become vegan for a variety of reasons other than some sort of orientation in that direction: the spectrum ranges from "punk strict vegans for animal rights, to people who are dietary vegans for personal health reasons, to people who practice veganism for religious and spiritual reasons" (158). Harper discusses the reasons that constitute differences in the ways that veganism is manifest within white and black communities, as well as the ways that race, class, and space are linked, noting that "collectively low-income urban black Americans in the USA *know* that a holistic plant-based diet is most often nearly impossible to achieve; simultaneously, the collectivity of white middle-class urban people *know* that a holistic plant-based diet is generally easy to achieve" (155). From her work on and with black female vegans, Harper asserts that black women are more likely to choose a plant-based diet in order to combat "racial health disparities" (157)—like diabetes and fibroids—and as a way of "decolonizing their bodies from the legacy of racialized colonialism" (157) than for reasons related to an animal activist position.

Harper's work undermines the notion that there is a singular reason for veganism and that there is a singular, representative vegan body, and she even wrests veganism away from its presumed necessary linkage to animal advocacy, noting that collectively black people are still dealing with "*human rights* to health and food security" ("Going Beyond" 163, my emphasis), a point that supports ecofeminism's view that "the many systems of oppression are mutually reinforcing" (Gaard, "Toward" 114), even as it turns the ecofeminist approach upside down, requiring that human rights must be acquired *before* one can consider the liberation of animals and of "nature" more broadly. Furthermore, Harper questions the omission from the mainstream vegan media of such foundational African American figures as social activist and raw foodist Dick Gregory and holistic healer Queen Afua, both of whom have been instrumental in promoting veganism within the African American community. If as Andrew Linzey asserts in his foreword to Karen Iacobbo and Michael Iacobbo's *Vegetarian America: A History*, "the omnivores who have written history have largely written vegetarians out of it[; indeed,] the vegetarian voice is almost absent from all human studies" (x), then the vegan voice is more deeply in shadow, and the voices of nonwhite vegans, as Harper's work makes clear, are the most rigorously marginalized of all.

I bring these two disparate explanations of why people become vegan into the discussion in order to highlight a tension that exists in terms of the ways that veganism that results from an animal-advocacy position is contradictorily rendered as both more legitimate and, again paradoxically, more self-righteously problematic and off-putting than veganism that is practiced for other reasons. These distinctions are often maintained by vegans who assert (on discussion boards, blogs, and other media) that *real* vegans are vegan from an animal welfare or animal-rights position and that veganism for other reasons constitutes an illegitimate or less rigorous ethic.[2] In this sense, animal advocacy and the choice to be vegan because of that advocacy serve to reinforce an ideological stance that masquerades an innate orientation and, as such, serves to divide certain vegans from others and to privilege, among vegans, the animal-advocacy position while within mainstream culture, the health advocacy position takes precedence. As Harper's work makes clear, defining empathy for animals as an inherent quality of certain people effectively functions to erase the sociocultural factors that allow those individuals the space, time, and resources that allow for the conceptualization of animals as worthy of ethical consideration.

Within much of the current discourse about vegan identity, this issue of legitimacy looms large, and the tension between "real" and "pseudo" vegans underscores many of the most contemporary media manifestations of veganism, shaped as they are by celebrity endorsements and positioned within an unprecedented moment during which, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, veganism has found a foothold as a mainstream practice. In many ways, in an attempt to make veganism more accessible to a broader group of people, it has been alienated from its more radical animal-advocacy roots and situated instead as a lifestyle option that is chosen for other reasons. As veganism more fully enters mainstream discourse, it remains to be seen how the tension between animal advocacy and dietary proscriptions based on health and determined by sociocultural factors will shape the next discursive manifestation of veganism that emerges as we move forward further into the twenty-first century and beyond.

By way of perhaps beginning to reconcile the idea that vegan identity is an orientation dependent upon the belief that animal and human rights are equally valuable (as posited by McDonald) with the belief that animal rights cannot be considered until after human decolonization has been achieved (as posited by Harper), I offer Greta Gaard's exploration of a queer ecofeminism based in part "on the observation that dominant Western culture's devaluation of the erotic parallels its devaluation of women and of nature; in effect, those devaluations are mutually reinforcing" ("Toward" 115). Gaard notes the work that ecofeminists have done to explore the interconnected nature of binary thinking, which orders the world in either/or categories and priv-

ileges those associated with masculinity (as opposed to femininity), culture (as opposed to nature), humanity (as opposed to animalism), and reason (as opposed to emotion). But in much of its praxis, according to Gaard, ecofeminism has failed in a specific way: "There is a rhetorical gap, however, when we find that . . . ecofeminists that do mention heterosexism in their introductory lists of human oppressions have still not taken the dualism of heterosexual/queer forward to be analyzed in the context of vertical lists of dualized pairs, and consequently into the theory being developed. In some cases, the same could be said for the dualism of white/nonwhite" ("Toward" 117). This recognition of the situatedness of queer and nonwhite as inferior and unexamined oppositional structures to heterosexual and white within the, perhaps, otherwise inclusive politics of ecofeminist analysis forces our recognition of the ways that sexual and racial orientations exist within a space that denies choice for the queer or nonwhite person. Gaard posits that queering ecofeminism would allow for an examination of the ways "queers are feminized, animalized, eroticized, and naturalized in a culture that devalues women, animals, nature, and sexuality." Furthermore, "we can [similarly] examine how persons of color are feminized, animalized, eroticized, and naturalized" (119).

Gaard's analysis links the persecution of queer peoples throughout history with the colonization of nonwhites, and she further situates both forms of objectification within the context of the ways that specific forms of erotic expression have been rendered "unnatural." She notes that "appeals to nature have often been used to justify social norms, to the detriment of women, nature, queers, and persons of color" ("Toward" 129), even as "nature" consistently contradicts the idea that there is such a thing as an unnatural erotic expression. For example, Gaard notes a vast array of erotic behaviors practiced by nonhuman animals—from homosexuality, to sexual promiscuity, to mating for life—and while she stops short of discussing the concept of sexual orientation, her argument for a queer ecofeminism asks that we trouble our conceptions of what is "natural" and "unnatural" in the realm of human and nonhuman behavior and that we consider how such categorizations work to mutually reinforce a binary worldview with regard to the culture/nature dualism and all of its manifestations. I would extend this impetus into our consideration of the way that veganism is manifest as an aspect of erotic, gendered, and racialized human activity—a natural behavior that is often, like various sexual expressions, codified as "unnatural." Furthermore, if I push Gaard's queer ecofeminism into the space of Harper's explication of black female vegan identity, it becomes impossible not to see decolonization and animal liberation as necessarily linked. Queering vegan studies, therefore, might allow us to make a space for veganism to exist at once as multiple things: as an orientation, as a socially conscious choice, and as a decision based on a politics of health-based racial decolonization.

The Three-Pronged Field of Animal Studies

If I am to posit a field of vegan studies, it is necessary for me to situate it as at once informed by and divergent from the field of animal studies, which is in itself multifaceted, consisting of critical animal studies, human-animal studies, and posthumanism. In her overview, *Critical Animal Studies: An Introduction*, Dawne McCance traces the origins of critical animal studies to the seventeenth century and the emergence of our modern conception of individualism as "a single, detached, and soon autonomous entity, itself divisible into lower and higher parts, animal body and animating mind" (1). Such a conception of the mind and body dualism contributed to our contemporary treatment of animals as "inert objects" (3) in the service of human intellectual advancement. She posits that "critical," in the case of critical animal studies, has three simultaneous and connected meanings. First, to be critical of something is to question it; second, if something is critical, it is grave—as, she argues, is the nature of our treatment of animals; third, the critical moment is the turning point, the opportunity for change to take place. As a field, critical animal studies became codified with and after the publication of Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* in 1975 as a "specialization within analytic philosophy, one that sets out to expose, and to offer ethical responses to, today's unprecedented subjection and exploitation of animals" (4). As such, critical animal studies theorists grapple with issues of—and distinctions between—liberation, rights, and advocacy for animals. The utilitarianism that underscores Singer's argument, for example, is countered by Tom Regan in his 1983 *The Case for Animal Rights*, in which Regan asserts that determining who or what is deserving of rights should not be dependent on the consequences—or utility—of a given action: "A good end does not justify an evil means. Any adequate moral theory will have to explain why this is so. Utilitarianism fails in this respect and so cannot be the theory we seek" (Regan, "Case" 580). Yet both, as McCance notes, make their cases for the ethical treatment of animals based on how like human beings animals are.

Such a stance, even as such theorists as Singer and Regan are involved in a project of critique with regard to the Cartesian dualisms that perpetuate animal subjugation, continues to reinforce a duality in its insistence that "animals" and "humans" are of different orders and that the rights humans might grant to animals are dependent upon the ability of animals to demonstrate their likeness to us. In the service of this comparison, Singer initiates his argument against speciesism via an analogy to racism and sexism, noting that "many philosophers and other writers have proposed the principle of equal consideration of interests, in some form or other, as a basic moral principle; but not many of them have recognized that this

principle applies to members of other species" (6). More recently, critical animal studies scholars have begun to challenge advocacy based on likeness and have worked to call into question the stability and constancy of the very categories of "human" and "animal." For example, Paola Cavalieri's 2001 *The Animal Question: Why Nonhuman Animals Deserve Human Rights* calls for an expanded theory of rights that would require all intentional beings be given moral status: "What does it mean to say of a being . . . that it has intrinsic value? Basically, it means to affirm that the value of a being is not bestowed from outside but is an integral part of the being itself" (36). In *The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)*, a series of lectures given in 1997 and published posthumously in 2008, Jacques Derrida critiques our very conception of rights as Cartesian in nature, and he notes that human arguments for animal rights actually enforce human conceptions of domination over animals (insofar as humans are capable of speaking for the needs of animals, in this case, the need for rights). According to Derrida in the first of the lectures that constitute *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, the very term "animal" constitutes the animal (an abstraction) as "other": "The animal, what a word! The animal is a word, it is an appellation that men have instituted, a name they have given themselves the right and the authority to give to another living creature" (392).

If critical animal studies is primarily interested in theorizing the nature of rights and arguing in terms of ethical responsibility with regard to the animal, even going so far as to challenge the category of animal as reinforcing Cartesian dualisms that will always privilege humanness over animalness, then human-animal studies constitutes an "interdisciplinary field that explores," according to Margo DeMello, "the spaces that animals occupy in human social and cultural worlds and the intersections humans have with them" (4).[3] In this sense, human-animal studies, which emerged as a field in the 1990s, is not invested in overtly challenging the human/animal binary but in examining how humans and animals negotiate relationships across the species boundary. Human animal studies scholars work in a diversity of fields in the social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences, and the field arose out of interest in animal imbrication in human society; therefore, even though human-animal studies may have real-world policy implications and, in fact, gave rise to the animal protection movement, it is not a means of advocating for animals (17). Human-animal studies recognizes that human existence is intimately connected to the lives of nonhuman animals and does work to "take seriously and place prominently the relationships between human and nonhuman animals, whether real or virtual" (7).

In *Animals and Society: An Introduction to Human-Animal Studies*, DeMello provides a list of definitions aimed at distinguishing between this field and others related to it. These include animal rights, "a philosophical position as well

as a social movement that advocates for providing nonhuman animals with moral status and, thereby, basic rights"; critical animal studies, "an academic field dedicated to the abolition of animal exploitation, oppression, and domination"; and human-animal studies, "the study of the interactions and relationships between human and nonhuman animals" (5). She notes that animal studies, a term generally used in the natural sciences "to refer to the scientific study of, or medical use of nonhuman animals," is, in the humanities, "the preferred term for what the social sciences call HAS [human-animal studies]" (5). In other words, not only are there theoretical and practical differences between the different branches of animal studies broadly defined, but the terminology for what constitutes a specific branch may differ depending on the scholarly field. As evidence of this complex diversity, the Animals and Society Institute, a nonprofit organization that promotes the study of human-animal relationships, has published a series with such titles as Nik Taylor's *Animals at Work*, Ryan Hediger's *Animals and War*, John Knight's *Herding Monkeys to Paradise: How Macaque Troops Are Managed for Tourism in Japan*, and Sandra Swart and Lance van Sittert's edited collection *Canis Africanis: A Dog History of South Africa*. Of critical importance to the work of human-animal studies is an examination of the constitution and construction of interspecies relationships, the reasons for those relationships and interactions, and the political and social implications of such relationships.

Cary Wolfe asserts that what began in the mid-1990s as "a smattering of work in various fields on human-animal relations and their representations in various endeavors—literary scientific—has . . . galvanized into a vibrant emergent field of interdisciplinary inquiry called animal studies or sometimes human-animal studies" (99), but he notes that both terms remain problematic. Posthumanism—a position that comes both before and after humanism, according to Wolfe (xv)—constitutes the most recent theoretical foray into the field of animal studies, and it takes into account both critical animal studies and human-animal studies in its impetus to situate our understanding of species in a space that challenges our conceptions of what it means to be human. In fact, the first section of Donna Haraway's *When Species Meet* is entitled "We Have Never Been Human." To support this assertion, Haraway notes that the human genome is found in only about 10 percent of all the cells that make up the human body: "The other 90 percent are filled with genomes of bacteria, fungi, protists, and such, some of which play in a symphony necessary to my being alive at all, and some of which are hitching a ride and doing the rest of me, of us, no harm. . . . To be one is always to *become with* many" (3–4). Haraway considers that species exist in a knot of interactions that coshape one another "in layers of reciprocating complexity all the way down. Response and respect are possible only in these knots, with animals and people looking back at each other, sticky with all their muddled histories" (42).

For Haraway and for other posthumanist theorists, species may be distinct from one another, but they are always enmeshed with one another as well from the level of their DNA to the level of the body. Such a notion compromises the concept of individualism on which much of critical animal studies has hung its hat. If Cartesian dualism is the framework that has allowed human mistreatment of animals, it is also, as I have noted above, the operating principle behind a rights-based position with regard to animals. Haraway offers a series of historical incidents, suggested by Freud, as "wounds to the primary narcissism of the self-centered human subject, who tries to hold panic at bay by the fantasy of human exceptionalism" (12). These incidents include Copernicus's realization that the earth is not the center of the universe, Darwin's theory of evolution (that animals are evolving in relation to one another, and "man" is not the culmination of evolution), and Freud's theory of the unconscious. Haraway adds the figure of the cyborg—an entity that "enfolds organic and technological flesh and so melds the Great Divide as well" (13) as a fourth "wound." For Cary Wolfe, posthumanism "names the embodiment and embeddedness of the human being in not just its biological but also its technological world, the coevolution of the human animal with the technicity of tools and external archival mechanisms (such as language and culture)" even as it also names a historical moment "in which the decentering of the human by its imbrication in technical, medical, informatics, and economic networks is increasingly impossible to ignore" (xv). The appeal of the posthumanist position is its situation as a counter to the humanism and anthropocentrism of critical animal studies and human-animal studies.

Feminism, Ecofeminism, and Vegan Studies

While the project of vegan studies owes much to all of the animal studies approaches above, it is decidedly different in that it is focused on what it means to be vegan, a singular identity category that may or may not be linked to an ethical imperative with regard to one's feelings about and advocacy for animals. For Haraway, ethical veganism "enacts a necessary truth, as well as bears witness to the extremity of the brutality in our 'normal' relations with other animals. However, I am also convinced that multispecies coflourishing requires simultaneous, contradictory truths if we take seriously *not* the command that grounds human exceptionalism, 'Thou shalt not kill,' but rather the command that makes us face nurturing and killing as an inescapable part of mortal companion species entanglements, namely, 'Thou shalt not make kill-

Logo for Feminists for Animal Rights.

able'" (105–6). The fact that veganism remains such a fraught position within the realm of animal studies is telling if not particularly surprising. A special 2012 issue of the journal *Hypatia* titled "Animal Others," edited by Lori Gruen and Kari Weil, contains essays that engage with the intersections of race, class, gender, and species, and Gruen and Weil invited six feminist scholars to weigh in on how these intersections impact animal studies. One of those feminists, Traci Warkentin, notes in "Must Every Animal Studies Scholar Be Vegan?" that there has been an increasing tendency for animal studies conferences to be vegan affairs, but she feels unease with regard to that prospect, as participants often feel the need to declare whether or not they are vegan: "I . . . want to be cautious . . . about the emergence of a reversed dualism—vegan versus carnivore—arising in animal studies that oversimplifies the choices people make as all-or-nothing, and may force us to have to proclaim allegiance to one side or the other, potentially generating a troubling mentality of you're either with us or against us" (501). Warkentin also finds troubling a "problematically uncritical promotion of veganism and a seeming lack of presence of environmental/eco/feminist praxis in animal studies generally" (499) in proclamations from animal studies scholars that other such scholars have a moral imperative to become vegan.[4] She carefully unpacks a broader set of considerations with regard to the supposed morality of veganism, in particular the fact that in the United States, Monsanto monopolizes soybean production—and soy foods are marketed as an ethical alternative to meat, even as Monsanto's soybean seeds are genetically modified and are, therefore, potentially dangerous. According to Warkentin, they are "genetically modified organisms, designed to be grown according to unsustainable, monocrop practices, which are chemical- and fossil-fuel-energy-intensive and environmentally destructive" (502).

Warkentin asks that animal studies scholars look critically at veganism and that in weighing the ethics of veganism, one's perspective be influenced by ecofeminist theory in order to fully realize and recognize that oppressions are linked, intersectional, and codependently reinforcing. Similarly, philosopher Deane Curtin offers the concept of "contextual moral vegetarianism" (and veganism) to trouble an uncritical reading of universal veganism as an ethical imperative. He notes that he "*can* . . . imagine saying to a dominant white culture, which has perfected the global food market and excelled at industrial farming, that we have an obligation to be vegetarian. In fact, the vastness of food choices available to white people . . . results in a particularly strong argument for the conclusion that the 'winners' in the colonial struggle for power are morally compelled to be vegetarian" (*Environmental Ethics* 143). But even as he recognizes the reasons members of such a society should be compelled to eschew eating animals, Curtin also recognizes that context is a significant factor in considering whether or not one should—or even *could*—be vegetar-

ian. Curtin argues that even though he is a "committed moral vegetarian," he feels that there are circumstances that would compel him to eat meat: "Would I not kill an animal to provide food for my son if he were starving?" ("Toward an Ecological" 70). He offers further geographical and cultural considerations that make vegetarianism difficult, dangerous, and often impossible. He does note, however, the ecofeminist position that veganism constitutes an antipatriarchal form of activism in that, since "the consumption of eggs and milk have in common that they exploit the reproductive capacities of the female . . . , to *choose one's diet* in a patriarchal culture . . . marks a daily bodily commitment to resist ideological pressures" (71).

I want to take up Warkentin's charge and work to address the academic omission of the foundational tenets of ecofeminism—by such scholars as Carol J. Adams—as theoretical perspective and lived ethic in the field of animal studies, which perpetuates the myth that its history is male authored. As I have previously detailed, this history seemingly began with utilitarian philosopher Peter Singer, was bolstered by Tom Regan's argument for intrinsic value, and gained rarefied scholarly status when Jacques Derrida took on the question of the animal in the aforementioned *The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)*. Since Derrida, the works of other, predominantly male authors—like Cary Wolfe (author of *Animal Rites* in 2003), for example—have been credited with keeping the field vibrant. The absence of the ecofeminist perspective that has as long a history as animal studies indicates a troubling dismissal of such a position's tenets and shows how, in terms of Adams's absent referent, repackaging and renaming can constitute a dangerous erasure that removes from view that which is of primary importance: as Adams notes, "meat" renders "animals" absent. I would argue that "animal studies" does the same thing to "ecofeminism."

Warkentin claims that "ecofeminism . . . has been operating 'under cover' with many aliases . . . including ecological feminism, feminist environmentalism, environmental feminism, material feminism, gender and environment, and queer ecologies," and in considering what a "vegan studies" project might look like, I am not attempting again to reconstitute via a different name an already extant field of engagement, as I am incredibly aware of how such a move serves to erase the history of previous linked modes of scholarly inquiry. But I am convinced that, given veganism's rhetorical treatment both in the academy and in mainstream U.S. culture and the ways that veganism intersects as a social movement with race, gender, sexual orientation, and species-based struggles, it is worth pulling veganism as a supposedly ethical *action* out of its enmeshment with its *philosophical* linkages to animal studies and instead situating it as an activist, theoretical mode of scholarly and lived experience that, in the ways that it operates in scholarly discourse, owes much to ecofeminism.

To be clear, I want to define what ecofeminism is and what it is not prior to moving forward, and I want to assert that while this text constitutes primarily an exercise in the rhetorical analysis of various representations, my stance as an ethical vegan ecofeminist no doubt influences my philosophical position with regard to my treatment of these representations. The primary tenet held by ecofeminists is that various forms of oppression are the result of a devaluing of those things that are designated inferior (and as feminine) in a binary construction of the world. In this conception, animals, women, and nature (as well as children and colonized "others") are placed on the same side of the binary divide as oppositional to humans, men, and culture. In "Living Interconnections with Animals and Nature," Greta Gaard defines ecofeminism as follows: "Drawing on the insights of ecology, feminism, and socialism, ecofeminism's basic premise is that the ideology that authorizes oppressions such as those based on race, class, gender, sexuality, physical abilities, and species is the same ideology that sanctions the oppression of nature. Ecofeminism calls for an end of all oppressions, arguing that no attempt to liberate women (or any other oppressed group) will be successful without an equal attempt to liberate nature" (1). The ecofeminist view holds oppressions as rhetorically linked, for example, by the treatment of women as "pieces of meat," or of colonized peoples as subhuman, as "brutes," and argues that such rhetorical linkages work to establish the psychological justification of actual—not rhetorical—oppressions.[5] Furthermore, the ecofeminist position offers that as all oppressions are linked and codependent, there can be no freedom from one form of oppression unless there is freedom from all of them.

What ecofeminism does *not* do is hold that these divisions are in any way essential or natural, despite many theorists' dismissal of ecofeminism based on such inaccurate readings.[6] Ecofeminists recognize the duality that privileges all things coded as male and rational and devalues all things coded as female and emotional as socially constructed, as ecofeminism is a form of material feminism, seeking to expose the cultural conditions that contribute to a devaluation of those categories relegated to the subordinate side of the binary. And in the realm of animal studies and ecocriticism, there has been some attempt to address the way that the recognized "legitimate" scholarly discourse has essentially written certain foundational female ecofeminist theoreticians right out of existence, as male scholars, one after another, appear to invent, as if for the first time, the field of animal studies.

For example, in the first edition of *Ecocriticism: The New Critical Idiom*, Greg Garrard failed to include Adams's concept of the absent referent in his chapter on animals—an error he corrected in the book's second edition in 2011, but only after he had been challenged for this oversight.[7] Adams herself discussed this with him via email in 2009.[8] Greta Gaard takes up the omission of female writers like Adams in a 2010 article in *Isle* in which she advocates for a more

feminist ecocriticism, one that addresses the ecocritical revisionism—by such writers as Garrard and Lawrence Buell—that has rendered a feminist perspective largely absent. She notes that omissions of foundational ecofeminist texts in "ecocritical scholarship are not merely a bibliographic matter of failing to cite feminist scholarship, but signify a more profound conceptual failure to grapple with the issues being raised by that scholarship as feminist, a failure made more egregious when the same ideas are later celebrated when presented via nonfeminist sources" ("New Directions" 3). And in a 2012 essay in *Critical Inquiry*, Susan Fraiman tracks gender in animal studies, noting that "in 1975, Peter Singer galvanized the modern animal-rights movement with *Animal Liberation*, a work that would be heralded as one of its founding texts. That same year, *The Lesbian Reader* included an article by Carol Adams entitled 'The Sexual Politics of Meat,' inspiration for a book eventually published in 1990. Her scholarship contributed to a growing body of ecofeminist work, emergent in the early 1980s, on women, animals, and the environment" (89). Unlike Adams (and other ecofeminists as well), who has written consistently over a period of nearly five decades on the subject of animals, Derrida, on the other hand, produced only the aforementioned singular sustained commentary *The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)* (despite, I should add, having felt that he was moving in the direction of animal studies for much of his career).

Fraiman's work is concerned with the revisionist history that places Derrida at the fore as the father of *legitimate* animal studies and erases from that discourse the voices of pioneering women—like Adams, Lori Gruen, Marti Kheel, and Greta Gaard. What Derrida did was to remove the gendered component from the analysis, to take animal studies away from various lineages at the point at which it had maintained established linkages with *women's studies*. What I want to do is not necessarily argue that veganism and vegan studies be dependent upon ecofeminism per se, as the reasons for why people become vegan (and the discourse generated with regard to that decision) are complex. But I want to restore ecofeminism to the conversation and to put forth that an ecofeminist approach to veganism allows for what I feel is the most inclusive politics with regard to that position, and such theoretical grounding provides a scaffolding onto which I can build my concept of vegan studies. And finally, I want to posit that veganism, as a field of study and as lived practice, owes much to ecofeminism's argument in favor of it.

The Vegan Studies Project in many ways follows Carol J. Adams's foundational work in *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (1990), a text I happened upon quite by accident in 2001, the year that the planes flew into the World Trade Center and incited then-president George W. Bush's "War on Terror." As my decision to become vegan and the September 11

attacks are forever linked in my mind, reading Adams's rhetorical analysis of the mythology of meat is likewise enmeshed with my lived experience deconstructing Bush's rhetoric of terrorism, which divided the world into simplistic binaries of us—Americans—and them—the terrorists. In Adams's formulation, tricks of language are similarly used to separate "meat" from "animal": "Through butchering, animals become absent referents. Animals in name and body are made absent *as animals* for meat to exist" (40). In the first chapter of her study, Adams unpacks the linkages between meat eating and patriarchy via an examination of the myths—from fairy tales to cookbooks—that underscore the fact that "the hearty meat eating that characterizes the diet of Americans and of the Western world is not only a symbol of male power, it is an index of racism" (52). Adams, like me, is a student of fictions and the various truths that they convey, and the texts that she analyzes in *The Sexual Politics of Meat* range from novels to historical documents to multicultural myths to television advertisements, all of which demonstrate the mythology of meat and the ways that a meat-based diet not only is cruel to animals but constitutes sexist and racist ideology.

Like *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, *The Vegan Studies Project* constitutes a cultural studies analysis, but my work examines the mainstream discourse surrounding and connecting animal rights to (or omitting animal rights from) veganism, with specific attention to the construction and depiction of the U.S. vegan body—both male and female—as a contested site manifest in contemporary works of literature, popular cultural representations, advertising, and news media. Because the vegan body poses various threats to the status quo in terms of what it eats, what it wears, what it purchases, and how it chooses *not* to participate in many aspects of the mechanisms that maintain what constitutes the mainstream, the discourse that has emerged with regard to veganism seeks, among other things, to bully it out of existence during a moment when it is most capable of altering the dominant cultural mindset or, conversely, to constitute the vegan body as an idealized paragon of health, beauty, and strength. But regardless of its various manifestations, the vegan body and vegan identity, as created by vegans and nonvegans and as depicted in art, literature, and the popular cultural media, constitute a performative project and an entity in a state of perpetual transformation and alteration; our understanding of veganism is in many ways based on various binary oppositions that seek to situate it as either one thing or another.

There are many reasons I decided to write this book, but if there was a clear catalytic moment that inspired me to undertake it in earnest, it was reading Harold Fromm's negative and homogenizing rhetoric about vegans and veganism in his July 4, 2010, *Chronicle of Higher Education* article called "Vegans and the Quest for Purity":

> The grandstanding of vegans for carefully selected life forms, to serve their own sensitivities—through their meat- and dairy-free diets, their avoidance of leather and other animal products—doesn't produce much besides a sense of their own virtue. As they make their footprint smaller and smaller, will they soon be walking on their toes like ballet dancers? And if so, what is the step after that? Pure spirit (a euphemism for bodily death)? If our existence is the problem—which it is—then only nonexistence can cure it. The supreme biocentric act is not to discover yet one more animal product to abstain from. The supreme biocentric act is dying, returning the finite matter and energy you have appropriated for yourself and giving them back to the creatures you stole them from. And what makes *them* so pure? Are they shedding tears as they tear you and each other apart? The real "crime" is existence, not being or using animals.

Fromm is the coeditor, with Cheryll Glotfelty, of the foundational *Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1996), and his comments here and elsewhere throughout his essay point to varying conceptions of vegan identity as contradictory, elitist, ill-informed, and antisocial. Underlying these assertions is the very prevalent mainstream belief—even held by environmental advocates and ecocritics like Fromm—that there should be a limit to an animal-advocacy agenda that may approach, but not fully encompass, a vegan ideology. In Fromm's estimation of them, vegans are a uniform group of annoyingly self-righteous loonies, people who are too precious to "get it"—and that representation is predominant within both mainstream and academic culture. Fromm's rhetoric disembodies vegans, asserting that the supposed goal of vegans is to become "pure spirit." The acceptance of Fromm's essay by the *Chronicle* points to the ire that veganism inspires—even in academic circles—but, perhaps more importantly, such acceptance points to the ways that "vegan," as a sub- and even countercultural identity, has entered the mainstream discursive fray and the ways that veganism has become a loaded idiom. Furthermore, Fromm's essay highlights the fact that veganism and vegan identity as concepts circulating in mainstream U.S. culture have also worked their way into academia in ways that require and inspire attention and engagement, particularly as the three-pronged field of animal studies gains increasing prominence within the academy.

To address Fromm's criticism of vegans, I offer Adams's notion of "retrograde humanism" as she establishes that position in "What Came before *The Sexual Politics of Meat*: The Activist Roots of a Critical Theory." Adams notes, "When people learn that I'm a vegan . . . they react with such vehemence and accuse me of not caring for (1) abused children, (2) the homeless, (3) the hungry, (4) battered women, (5) the environment, and (6) workers, among many other things. . . . Sometimes I laughingly claim that my veganism has prompted more people to announce their concerns for human suffering than

my activism ever did" (127). Retrograde humanism, she notes, happens when people who are not vegan assert their own humanism in the face of what feels like an ethical confrontation ("finding out they might be doing more, they accuse vegans of doing less" [127]), and this formulation underscores many vegan depictions in popular culture. In such a construction, animal activism or veganism functions to lead one into an infinite ethical regression: the only way to be "genuine" or "good enough" in such a formulation is not to do anything, because as soon as one does *something*, one is held to a standard (to which others do not hold themselves) that immediately assumes that one is not doing *enough*. This is the same argument with which Henry Brougham challenged Joseph Ritson in the 1800s, and it is an argument familiar to most vegans. While Fromm's argument is slightly different—he claims that vegans are actually trying to do *too much* as they seek to exist in an impossible state of purity—the resultant stance that he takes ultimately constitutes the same retrograde position. While Fromm highlights the aforementioned paradox inherent in veganism, positing that dying is the "supreme biocentric act" again reduces any attempt to practice a vegan ethic to a version of not doing enough. Better to live a life in which one does not even try to reduce suffering than to never be able fully to eliminate it—or, better yet, to die and, one could imagine, stop being such a nuisance to Fromm and the rest of the nonvegan population.

Finally, if Fromm's rendering constitutes the perfect summation of all things negatively coded as vegan, then the website vgirlsvguys.net constitutes a polar opposite depiction of vegans as embodied and bodily, focusing as it does on images of real-life vegans, many of whom are celebrities, acting as models in highly refined photos.[9] Vgirlsvguys is "a multimedia project promoting veganism by exposing vegan beauty, strength and diversity," and the site features photos and personal narratives about why the individuals featured chose to become vegan. The website defines veganism as "the acknowledgement that a replaceable and fleeting pleasure isn't more valuable than someone's life and liberty," and the vegans featured on vgirlsvguys constitute a mixture of races (although most are white), ages (although most are under thirty), and appearances (although most are beautiful in ways that reinforce social standards), and their narratives offer various reasons for their decisions to become vegan (although most have to do with animal rights). Comedian Steve-O offers this reason for becoming vegan: "I wanted to improve my karma," while former Ironman triathlete Brendan Brazier became vegan, he says, because he "found that plant-based, whole food nutrition was the best for recovery as well as the best for overall energy and ability to train efficiently." Violinist Chrysanthe Tan gives this reason for becoming vegan after becoming a vegetarian at the age of nine: "I was neither an animal lover nor a particularly warmhearted child, but eating animals simply did not make sense

to me; I found it unnatural, unnecessary, and frankly, repulsive," while medical professional Moira Schwartz became vegan after learning about factory farming.

I would not argue that the vgirlsvguys representation of veganism is necessarily any more true or false than Fromm's, as arguing for correct or incorrect representation is not the purview of this text, but what is clear is that this site exists to counter what its creators believe to be misconceptions about veganism; as Karen Iacobbo and Michael Iacobbo note, "Lingering stereotypes and dubious 'facts' plague the depiction of the lives and habits of . . . vegans" (58). My study not only examines the reasons for the often negative and inflammatory discourse surrounding vegan identity but also explores the sexualization and often-contradictory gender-specific rhetorical constructions of both vegan and animal bodies. For example, the feminist argument for veganism offered by such writers as Adams has very different gender-specific valiances from model and plastic surgery devotee Pamela Anderson's identification as vegan, as do multiple antivegetarian/vegan ad campaigns aimed at men, which associate meat eating with masculinity. For example, the Hillshire Farms' commercials in which men cheer "Go meat!" offer a starting point from which to examine mixed martial arts cage-fighting champion Mac Danzig's (or, for that matter, Mike Tyson's) ultramasculine vegan (or "hegan") identity, a response to representations of male vegans as effeminate or unbelievable.[10] Alternately, this viewpoint has been embraced by animal-rights entities like People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) in its various campaigns that seek to market veganism to men by asserting that veganism leads to increased strength and stamina. In examining such representations, it is impossible *not* to look at the sexual and racial politics that necessarily inform and contribute to my nascent conception of vegan studies.

A 2006 estimate placed the number of vegans in the United States somewhere around 1.7 million, and with "vegan movement organizations counting their membership in the tens of thousands, there are arguably more practicing vegans in the USA than there are members of vegan organizations" (Cherry 156). Indeed, despite the existence of the Vegan Society, which was founded in England in 1944, vegans tend *not* to constitute a unified group in possession of a cohesive ideological mandate; they tend *not* to be joiners, but they do have "a propensity towards alternativism in other areas of life . . . and eschewing the use of all animal products represents a change that necessarily involves all areas of life" (McDonald 2). While veganism does not constitute a unified social movement, as an ideology it is marked by conscious individual actions that nonetheless stand in stark opposition to the consumer mandate of U.S. capitalism, and for this reason the actions of individual vegans pose a substantial—if symbolic—threat to such a paradigm. This book looks at

the formation and dissemination of the current contradictory, laudatory, and alternately scathingly negative social discourse surrounding vegan identity, particularly as that identity has shifted historically to be constituted in specific ways in the twenty-first-century United States. Further, this book exposes the reasons for this discourse and works to reconcile such presentations with those positive, healing, and personally productive aspects of vegan identity that were, during the first decade of the twenty-first century, cast in shadow in the glare of what constituted a marked backlash against such an identity position that began taking shape in the wake of the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States. In the service of this analysis, this work recognizes veganism as a part of and yet distinct from various fringe, religious, and subcultural movements—from punk and straight edge to Seventh Day Adventists to Rastafarians, for example—and seeks to disrupt the presentation of a homogeneous notion of what it means to be vegan; doing so provides a frame of reference from which to deconstruct the mainstream and media-based discourse that often depends upon and reinforces a singular yet constantly shifting conception of veganism.

To date, there is no cultural studies text that examines the social and cultural discourses that imagine the vegan body and vegan identity, despite an abundance of texts that deal with veganism and vegans in various other ways. For example, there are numerous vegan cookbooks currently on the market, many for famous vegan restaurants like the Candle Café in New York and the Millennium Café in Chicago; in fact, an Amazon.com search on November 2, 2012, pulled up 3,331 hits for "vegan cookbook." In addition, there are multiple texts about how to be a vegan and the ethics of veganism. These include Joanne Stephaniak's *The Vegan Sourcebook* (2000), Rob Torres's *Vegan Freak: Being Vegan in a Non-vegan World* (2010), and Erik Marcus's *Vegan: The New Ethics of Eating* (2000). There are exposés of the meat industry, like John Robbins's *Diet for a New America* (1998, first released in 1987) and Howard F. Lyman's *Mad Cowboy* (2001), that maintain a decidedly vegan focus. Will Anderson's *This Is Hope: Green Vegans and the New Human Ecology* (2012) theorizes our planet's ecological salvation as inherently linked to veganism. There are works of vegan nonfiction and poetry (Ben Shaberman's *The Vegan Monologues* [2009]; A. Breeze Harper's edited collection *Sistah Vegan: Black Female Vegans Speak* [2010]; Benjamin Zephaniah's *The Little Book of Vegan Poems* [2002]), and there are philosophical explorations like Jonathan Foer's *Eating Animals* (2009) and Melanie Joy's *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear Cows: An Introduction to Carnism* (2009).

More recently, my colleague Hal Herzog published *Some We Love, Some We Hate, Some We Eat: Why It's So Hard to Think Straight about Animals* (2010) to wide acclaim. The success of Herzog's book points both to a growing cultural consciousness with regard to animals and animal-rights issues *and* to the often ambivalent stance with which we broach the topic of animal-rights identities.

In addition to the mainstream titles listed above, there are several more academic studies of veganism and vegetarianism, including the aforementioned *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, by Carol J. Adams, the twentieth-anniversary edition of which was released by Continuum in 2011, and vegetarian histories by Karen Iacobbo and Michael Iacobbo, Tristam Stuart, and Colin Spencer—all of which I discussed earlier in this chapter. However, the fact that Adams's work constitutes the sole scholarly cultural study of the discourse of meat—and that it has remained in print for twenty years—points to both the dearth *and* the need for an academic cultural studies approach to the topic of veganism.

The first chapter, "Tracing the Discourse of Veganism in Post-9/11 U.S. Culture," provides a history of veganism and the paradoxical nature of such a position that at once seeks to preserve life even as the practitioner of veganism is caught, like all living things, in a cycle of life and death. In terms of such a paradox, this chapter situates as pivotal the rhetoric of the Bush administration's response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, in terms of contemporary conceptions and representations of veganism in the United States as dangerous and deadly. This chapter examines the historical context for veganism's distinction from vegetarianism and veganism's linkages with animal-liberation movements, and it situates both positive and negative perceptions of veganism in the United States within the context of various sociocultural factors that have shaped our thinking with regard to vegan identity over a period of several decades. What this chapter shows is the way that within the government's rhetorical response to the events of 9/11, which established a profound divide between "us" and "them" (U.S. citizens and terrorists), veganism became an ideology elided with "them," a dangerous, threatening, and un-American dietary choice that had more to do with anti-American sentiment than with the mere eschewing of animal products. Within this chapter, I examine the rhetoric of former president George W. Bush's post-9/11 speeches, the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, and the passage of the Patriot Act as contributing to a social climate that treated veganism not only with suspicion but also with outright hostility. This hostility resulted in numerous narratives within mainstream media that utilized the term "terrorist" to refer to specific vegetarian and vegan individuals, groups, and ideologies.

Taking Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) as its starting point, the second chapter, "Vegan Vampires: The Politics of Drinking Humans and Animals in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Twilight*, and *True Blood*," examines three contemporary representations of vampires: Joss Whedon's 1997–2003 television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*; Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* saga, both the books and the movies (2005–8); and Alan Ball's HBO series *True Blood* (based on the Southern Vampire Mysteries series by Charlaine Harris), which first aired in 2008. A

chronological examination of these three texts demonstrates how the vegan/vegetarian vampire trope shifts over time, as well as how the terms "vegan" and "vegetarian" become further and further removed from their original significance as dietary and lifestyle choices devoid of meat and animal products. Throughout *Buffy*, there are few if any references to vegetarian or veganism that are not negative, and neither the term "vegetarian" nor "vegan" is used to describe Buffy's vampire love interests, Angel and Spike, who refrain from drinking human blood. In the context of Stephanie Myer's *Twilight* saga, however, the morality of the Cullen vampire clan is designated by its members' "vegetarian" status. In the context of *Twilight*, "vegetarian" vampires eat animals—the very antithesis of the term's actual meaning—instead of humans. In contrast to her depiction in Myer's novels, within the context of the films that have been made about the saga, protagonist Bella Swann is portrayed as vegetarian. Finally, in *True Blood*, Bill Compton (Stephen Moyer) drinks synthetic blood (the TruBlood of the show's title) instead of human blood. The show situates vampires as beings who are "coming out of the closet" in the bigoted Louisiana backwater of Bon Temps and in the United States more broadly as a metaphor for the battle for equal rights for homosexuals in the present-day United States. In the world of *True Blood*, the acceptance of vampires within mainstream society is entirely dependent upon their status as vegan, drinking synthetic—not animal or human—blood.

In the third chapter, "Vegan Zombies of the Apocalypse: McCarthy's *The Road* and Atwood's *The Year of the Flood*," I examine two recent apocalyptic narratives, Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road* (2006) and Margaret Atwood's novel *The Year of the Flood* (2009), in order to explore the ways that, through their focus on food and the ethics of consumption in the postapocalyptic world, both works engage with and complicate the zombie/cannibal metaphor so prevalent in contemporary popular culture. Specifically, I examine the ways that the postapocalyptic landscapes depicted in these works—sunless and barren in *The Road* and baked and polluted in *The Year of the Flood*—reduce consumption to one of two extremes, either vegan or cannibal, and the ways that both works deconstruct the breakdown of language as it was, prior to the end of the world, linked to the marketing and consumption of specific kinds of food—meat and vegetable, real and "fake." Mark Bosco suggests that "the apocalyptic orientation of contemporary literature . . . impels the reader to act, to direct the future by transforming the here and now" (158), and these works ask that we act with regard to how and what (and who) we eat, before it is too late.

Whereas the two chapters that precede it are interested in looking at the ways that veganism is manifest in popular and literary culture, in the fourth chapter, "Death by Veganism, Veganorexia, and Vegaphobia: Women, Choice, and the Politics of 'Disordered' Eating," I examine the way that, within much

of the current cultural discourse, vegetarianism—and veganism as rendered as the most "restrictive" example of vegetarianism—factors into a larger contemporary debate about control and ownership of women's bodies. Further, I examine the way that nonnormative diets are rendered as inherently disordered forms of consumption quite simply because the rhetoric employed to discuss vegetarianism and veganism is the same rhetoric that is used to discuss disordered eating. Because they are rendered as "severe" and "restrictive," such diets are policed as responsible not only for women's self-starvation via anorexia but also for the murder of innocent children at the hands of their irresponsible vegan mothers. In the context of much of the discourse examined in this chapter, veganism is disregarded outright or treated as a more extreme faction of vegetarianism. This oversight or conflation, depending on the case, functions to reduce the nature of female vegan identity to a position solely concerned with privation and largely silences a counter antispeciesist discourse that underscores much of vegan identity politics. To counter this reductive depiction of veganism, this chapter considers veganism as the tool that might aid women in their recovery from eating disorders, not as the mechanism by which their eating became disordered in the first place.

In the fifth chapter, "Men, Meat, and Hegan Identity: Veganism and the Discourse of Masculinity," I examine various visual and print media, from Rod Lurie's 2000 film *The Contender*, to television advertisements, to news stories about male "power" vegans, in order to analyze the discourse surrounding perceptions of male veganism—particularly "heganism"—and the cultural backlash against a perceived crisis in masculinity that such an identity category has engendered. The discourse of this backlash, unsurprisingly, mandates that meat is an essential, primal, and inescapable component of heterosexual masculinity. Unlike the scrutiny and criticism leveled at women for their dietary choices, as seen in the chapter that precedes this one, however, men's diets are much less scrutinized in the mainstream press: "Men's eating goes largely unnoticed" (Buerkle 253). While this assertion may by and large be true, since the turn of the twenty-first century, there has been more attention focused on men's nonnormative dietary choices and the role that such choices play in a perceived crisis of masculinity marked by women's increased access to spheres of power and influence. In the face of perceived female empowerment and subsequent shifts in the diets of many men away from "masculine" fare—meat and potatoes—toward less standard choices, a discursive space has opened for the negotiation of new, nonnormative masculinities that challenge our traditional understandings of what it means to be manly, despite the fact that men have historically found themselves much less theoretically constrained and qualified in terms of their dietary choices. In many ways, men, as the dominant sex, have more to lose by challenging standard dietary choices than do women.

The final chapter, "The Celebrity Vegan Project: Pamela, Mac, Mike, Ellen, and Oprah," examines the concept of the vegan celebrity and the ways that a celebrity's status as vegan factors into the other aspects of highly public and highly scrutinized identity politics. Furthermore, this chapter examines veganism as a product, as, for example, a diet marketed as a way to lose weight or a dietary aphrodisiac promoted for its potential to increase sex drive and stamina. In the context of the preceding chapters, which examine the way that the vegan body as a generalized entity is constituted, gendered, and conscripted within mainstream media, this chapter focuses on the ways that fame complicates, highlights, challenges, or reinforces the discourse of veganism as it has been depicted in the preceding parts of this study. There are numerous web sites that contain lists of celebrity vegans—like Vegan Wolf and Happy Cow—and many "famous" vegans have given interviews about the reasons for their veganism; therefore, there are numerous celebrities upon whom such a chapter could focus. I pay particular attention to the veganism of actor and model Pamela Anderson; the circumstances that generate vastly different vegan personas for former heavyweight fighter Mike Tyson and mixed martial artist Mac Danzig; and the ways that talk-show personalities Ellen DeGeneres and Oprah Winfrey influence the cultural discourse of veganism.

CHAPTER 1

Tracing the Discourse of Veganism in Post-9/11 U.S. Culture

Summer in the year 2001 is inextricably connected, in my mind, with two major events: my decision to become vegan and the day that the planes flew into the towers in Manhattan. I had decided to become vegan, but now, in the retrospect clouded by the plumes of billowing smoke, the screams and melting metal, the people, desperate for escape and air, hurling themselves from hundreds of windows, I don't remember the exact date. I remember that I sold my leather Fluevogs and my Doc Martens on eBay. I cried to my husband, Jason; this felt like a kind of baptism, a kind of secular salvation for me, a woman who had been vegetarian since 1989 and had been volunteering at the Dakin Animal Shelter since moving to Massachusetts. I got rid of wool. I went into a major sulk over the loss of fresh mozzarella pizza at Pizza Paradiso in Northampton. It must have been summer. It was still warm; my windows were down, and I was driving, speaking through tears to Jason about this decision to, as I said at the time, "make my life consistent." And it was an important decision, made on a day that I should certainly remember, but the particulars of it are lost to me now, enveloped in what must have come immediately afterward, the attack, the video images played on a constant unending loop, the deaths.

Everyone keeps saying that there's no way to forget that day. And while I can't forget it, I don't necessarily remember it either. That day, that beautiful, blue, warm, and peaceful day, I woke up and, I suppose—because this is what I always do—I had coffee. Maybe I went running, but it must have been early, because I remember moving my car from one side of South Street to the other so that repairs could be made on the asphalt near my apartment. And I remember that the radio was on in my car as I moved it, as always, tuned to NPR, and I knew, at that moment, that a plane had flown into the North Tower of the World Trade Center. Here's where memory fades, at least with regard to time. I know that I watched the news with my downstairs neighbor Jamie. I know that I talked to Jason, but I don't remember the content of that conversation. And I don't remember how time unfolded for the rest of the day.

I know that I tried to call Stacy, my friend from Staten Island who lived in New Jersey and who was turning thirty-two on September 11, 2001. I suppose

that if one lives long enough in a world of mass murder, one's birthday will, inevitably, coincide with something like this. For me, all there was, at least for a long time, was the coincidence of my birthday with the death date of Aphra Behn in 1689. But then there was the shooting at Virginia Tech in 2007. And my birthday, like Stacy's, became forever associated with evil and the mortality of my species. I tried to call Stacy that day. The lines were blocked. The world just stopped. What I remember next is all out of sequence: Driving to school. Driving away from school; UMASS closed at 1:00 p.m. Sitting down in the office of Stephen Clingman, my dissertation director, and trying not to cry. He told me that it was okay. I said that it most certainly wasn't. It was the only day during the five years that I was in Massachusetts, five years marked by impossible blizzards, feet-deep snows, ice, extreme cold, that the university shut its doors and let its charges wander without cause. The planes had flown from Logan. We were free, and we were implicated. I left the campus. The gates at the parking garage were open; no one had to pay. I went home and ran a 5K at the hospital grounds at Smith College. It was Tuesday. We raced weekly, but this day my heart nearly exploded because I felt that I had to run for everyone who had died, everyone who had never run before, everyone who had called out that morning only to die just a bit later.

And that's all I remember.

In the years that have passed since September 11, since that singular September 11, I have closed my heart and my mind. I have been annoyed at the perpetual remembrances, the constant calling to the fore the faces of the lost. I know that there is worse evil in the world. This holds no candle to the Holocaust. I know about what's happening in Congo. And then there is the moment, which is barely a moment. Even as it is, even as it leaves an impression that I still cannot shake, even this many years out. Since my country invaded Afghanistan in some misguided and ill-conceived attempt to right the wrongs of 9/11/2001, the statistics for just how many people have died are hard to find. But my sense is that we've killed—many, many times over—the number of U.S. citizens that died that day. In fact, according to a 2011 Brown University study, by 2011 the civilian death toll for our wars with Afghanistan and Iraq was somewhere in the neighborhood of 132,000 (Ackerman). My mind wants to continue to forget.

Back to veganism: I think about my country, about what we do, about the narrative that we spin. I watched a documentary about the phone calls that were made from people in the towers as the towers were about to go down. One mother said that she stopped listening to her son's message, that she had created a message that he didn't really say, because that message, the one that she'd invented, was more comforting to her than the *real* message. And that's the way with history: Ernest Renan said, in a lecture he delivered in 1882, "forgetting . . . is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation." The narrative that

we tell—even in spite of concrete images and saved final voice messages—is a narrative shaped by what we remember, certainly, but it's also a narrative of invention, of justification, built just as much on what we choose, consciously or not, to forget. Nationalism "works to cushion what Walter Benjamin calls the experience of shock" (Redfield 4).

There are no voices to hear or meld or misremember when it comes to animals. Every day in the United States, the narrative that we imagine or excuse with regard to their lives and deaths is our own. I became a vegan in 2001 on a day that I should remember but don't, because the reality of not being vegan was staring me squarely in the face. And then September 11 encroached, called me forth to see the evil that spurs us onward in a blind frenzy to win some impossible game. I know many truths from that impossible year: we are still at war, an invisible enemy is supposedly vanquished, and many, many more humans have had to die. And I am still a vegan, and this choice will continue to sustain me, will continue to bring me up against impossible murderous adversaries, real and imagined, remembered and forgotten, again, and again, and again.

I have chosen September 11, 2001, as the definitive moment in American history after which a vegan studies project could begin to take shape; it is a moment during which veganism became both visible and highly suspect in a period just after both vegetarianism and veganism had gained some cultural prominence and cachet. In that moment, American culture shifted in profound ways in terms of its relationship to its citizens and to the citizens of the rest of the world, and the binary rhetoric that characterized our national response in the wake of the events of 9/11 still resonates. It is a rhetoric that characterized a new national narrative that constituted an overt and explicit politics of fear, of profound bifurcation, and of xenophobic intolerance. It was a narrative that immediately and intractably divided the world into then-president George W. Bush's "us" and "them"—the United States and the amorphous and illusive terrorists—and it allowed us to step into easy objectification of anyone and any practice that did not look "American." As Marc Redfield asserts, "In so many ways, September 11, 2001 bisects history, altering the way people speak, think, and feel about the world around them" (3). Jeffrey Melnick characterizes that bisection in terms of the "official story" and the actual reality of 9/11: our "'9/11 questions' . . . all grow from a shaky and contingent yet powerful consensus that has developed in the years since 2001 about how closely the official narrative of 9/11 matches what actually happened that day" (1). The story that the nation told itself and the rest of the world after the attacks was a narrative that "ritually repeated . . . [the] same key words and phrases in an attempt to control the possible meanings" (2) of the tragedy, and the result was a paranoid nationalism dependent upon the administration's binary worldview, which generated the rhetoric of a War

on Terror that was a crusade, the resultant discourse of which positioned the United States as the agent of divinely supported goodness, a holy warrior ready to "locate and punish the evildoers" (Welch 8).[1]

To quote Paul Bové in the chapter titled "Discourse" in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, discourses "produce knowledge about humans and their society," and an analysis of discourse aims to "describe the surface linkages between power, knowledge, institutions, intellectuals, the control of populations, and the modern state" as these intersect in systems of thought and as represented in texts (55–56). The current cultural discourse of veganism has been shaped in a post-9/11 moment to construct the vegan body as a contested, paradoxical, and contradictory site, at once a paragon of physical health and simultaneously compromised by such presumed physical shortcomings as the looming specter of B12 deficiency (as Tristam Stuart notes, "There's little risk of B12 deficiency in a vegan diet . . . but the myth continues" [294]). As will become increasingly clear throughout this study, in its avoidance of meat, heavily coded as masculine food, the vegan body is therefore feminized, but if that body is female and becomes pregnant, it is policed as guilty of privation and denial, a danger to itself and its offspring both before and after birth. Because veganism is a feminizing identity category, men who choose to be vegan are viewed as simultaneously more virtuous but also less manly than their omnivorous counterparts (Ruby and Heine 448), and they must contend with such pseudoscientific claims as Jim Rutz's that soy, often considered a staple of a vegan diet, "is feminizing, and commonly leads to a decrease in the size of the penis, sexual confusion and homosexuality."

In response to such emasculating assertions, the male vegan body is alternatively constituted in the media as "hegan," hypermasculine and alpha male, in possession of some mix of characteristics—muscle mass, wealth, political prowess—that allows it to be manly and vegan at the same time. And with the notable exception of such celebrity vegans as Mike Tyson, the vegan body is positioned, represented, and constructed within contemporary U.S. discourse as white.[2] As A. Breeze Harper notes, the fact that 70 percent of U.S. vegans are white and female ("Going Beyond" 158) contributes to a critical omission of vegan experiences of people of color: "Popular media . . . only centralize white socio-spatial epistemologies of veganism, reflecting the collective history of white middle-class people's privileged relationship to consumption, spaces of power, and production of what is ethical" (159). Since the turn of the twenty-first century, in the discourse surrounding the construction of the vegan body and our understanding of it as a polarizing and paradoxical entity, veganism signifies for much of the population as an identity category that is marked by whiteness and elitist social privilege, by profound utopian naïveté, and by judgmental fundamentalist zealotry. Simultaneously, in the post-9/11 moment, the choice to be vegan meant to step outside of the confines of what constituted an agreed-upon "American" identity.

Elizabeth Cherry reads veganism as "a new form of social movement that is not based on legislation or identity politics, but is based instead on everyday practices in one's lifestyle" (156). In the United States, veganism is most often an individual action based primarily on one's beliefs about animals; it is, therefore, often only secondarily about one's diet. But as Matthew Cole and Karen Morgan assert, despite the fact that "veganism is understood by most vegans (though not necessarily in these terms) as an aspect of anti-speciesist practice," the media's tendency to focus on veganism as a dietary choice that is dependent upon restriction and privation "tends to perpetuate a veganism-as-deviance model that fosters academic misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the meaning of veganism for vegans" (135–36). While some people do choose a vegan *diet* for health reasons—and while this tendency appears to be increasing due to the current mainstream tendency to divorce veganism from animal advocacy and focus instead on the health benefits of such a lifestyle—the impetus that drives most people to eschew all animal products is a profound belief that animals can and do suffer and that to inflict suffering on them in order to render them into food and clothing (items that are necessary to humans but that do not necessarily need to come from animals) is inherently and unequivocally wrong.[3] Furthermore, to live one's life without consuming or wearing animal products, particularly in the United States, is such a major shift "from the normative practice and ideology of human dominance over nonhuman animals" (McDonald 1) that to choose such a lifestyle essentially is to place oneself perpetually on the extreme margins of society. It is to invite questions, criticism, alienation, suspicion, and misunderstanding. And at various points in history, it has been to be persecuted both implicitly and explicitly in the popular press, in literature, and in mainstream, academic, and scientific media as unnatural, unhealthy, and decidedly un-American. In what follows, I examine this history of vegan identity as it was established within U.S. cultural discourse with particular focus on the twenty or so years preceding the events of 9/11 in order to illustrate the ways that the perception of veganism and vegan identity shifted radically after 9/11.

To do this requires that we trace the trajectory of veganism's current status and its various enmeshed cultural manifestations in order to situate veganism socially and historically within the larger, more codified, and less socially stigmatizing narrative of vegetarianism in the United States. While the term "vegetarian" was coined in the 1840s (Stuart xvii), according to Claire Suddath's 2008 *Time* magazine article, "A Brief History of Veganism," "the term [vegan] was termed in 1944 [by British woodworker Donald Watson]," even though "the concept of flesh-avoidance can be traced back to ancient India and eastern Mediterranean societies." In the United States, "activism for animal rights started early. . . . Laws were passed to protect animals in the eighteenth century" (Iacobbo and Iacobbo 5), yet in the West there has always been resistance

to a vegetarian ethic—historically based in large part on the Judeo-Christian religious belief that entitles "man" to "dominion" over animals, as stated in Genesis 1:26. By the time of Donald Watson's death at age ninety-five in 2005, around two million people self-identified as vegan in the United States (Suddath), yet while "American vegetarianism has broken free of its philosophical and religious roots, becoming an accepted health choice . . . veganism is still tied to the animal rights movement and is out there on the fringe" (Suddath). In the first part of the twenty-first century, however, veganism has become increasingly visible in large part due to the media attention paid to so-called celebrity vegans, even as there has also ensued a backlash that situates veganism as a threat, in a very real sense, to American identity. The social crossroads that mark the tension between visibility and mainstream acceptance or rejection of veganism in the United States are situated at an historical moment during which the United States is emerging from the grip of George W. Bush's rhetoric of the War on Terror—waged since 2001—and from a pronounced economic recession.

By tracing veganism's history and representation in the United States prior to that moment, it becomes possible to see that our contemporary understanding of veganism is deeply enmeshed with and constructed by our conception of our former administration's rhetorical presentation of its so-called War on Terror and the "visual traumas" inflicted on us after 9/11, which Marc Redfield argues have shaped our national narrative. Karen Iacobbo and Michael Iacobbo's *Vegetarian America: A History* traces the way that vegetarianism has evolved and been shaped by various other social movements that have taken place in the United States; their work situates U.S. vegetarianism as having occurred in three distinct periods beginning in the eighteenth century, and they note that in the United States, the modern vegetarian movement was established by nineteenth-century Christians, "and even some evidence holds, that at least two Native American tribes practiced vegetarianism" (1). While the Vegetarian Society was founded in England in 1847, William Metcalf organized the American Vegetarian Convention in 1850, which resulted in the creation of the American Vegetarian Society (AVS) (71). The Iacobbos chronicle the lives of such foundational figures of the 1830s and 1840s as the "Father of Vegetarianism" (23), Sylvester Graham, and physician William Alcott, author of *Vegetable Diet* and cofounder, with Charles Lane, of Fruitlands, a short-lived "vegan community in Harvard, Massachusetts" (60). This work also links vegetarianism to other social movements, like abolition, noting that "unlike today, when social movements tend to stand apart from one another, during the Jacksonian era reformers of various causes were united in their views" (62). The authors connect American vegetarianism to American feminism, noting that AVS member and women's rights advocate Anne Denton asserted that "an integral step in woman's liberation . . . was to change her diet" (78)

and not eat meat, not, however, because Denton saw an ecofeminist link between the oppression of animals and the oppression of women but because she believed that women were meant to be "benevolent, and that by cooking (and eating) meat they were lowering themselves" (79).

Other nineteenth-century U.S. women chronicled by the Iacobbos who factor predominantly in vegetarianism's history are Seventh Day Adventist Ellen G. White, Clara Barton, founder of the Red Cross, and 1872 presidential contender Victoria Woodhull, whose platform included "women's suffrage, dress reform, free love, [and] Grahamite principles, including vegetarianism" (112).[4] A second wave of vegetarian growth took place in the United States between 1900 and 1930, initiated by the influence of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1905)—which caused many conversions to a vegetarian diet—on the passage of the Pure Food Act and the Meat Inspection Acts of 1906. The Iacobbos note that between 1902 and 1921, "the annual consumption of flesh food ha[d] fallen from 225 pounds . . . to 170 pounds . . . , a decline of 24 percent" (154). Nonetheless, with the advent of the Great Depression, "the golden era of vegetarianism was about to end" (155). The period from the Depression to the early 1960s was marked by attacks on vegetarianism by both the meat industry and the medical establishment, leading to a rise in the consumption of meat over the course of these decades.

Vegetarianism did not enjoy a prevalent place within American culture again until the 1960s and 1970s, when it became part of the counterculture movement of those decades. It is worth reiterating that "vegan" as an identity category did not exist until the middle of the twentieth century, even though what we now think of as veganism had been in practice since the beginning of recorded history. In the United States, the American Vegan Society, founded by H. Jay Dinshah, did not exist until 1960. Even as codifying "veganism" limited and homogenized it as a qualified identity position, distinguishing veganism by name did allow it to enter the discourse as something decidedly other than vegetarianism. Therefore, veganism did not really receive any real attention from the media until the third wave of U.S. vegetarianism, demarcated by the Iacobbos as having begun in the 1980s and leading up to 2003, the year before their book was published. And the creation of the Internet during this period allowed not only greater access to information about vegetarianism and veganism but also greater opportunities to actively engage in the discourse of defining and shaping those positions.

I want to look briefly at the decades of the 1980s and 1990s, a period during which vegetarianism—and even veganism to an extent—experienced a kind of mainstream recognition and acceptance that was significantly diminished in the subsequent decade. To begin, Ingrid Newkirk and Alex Pacheco founded People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) in 1980, and that

organization's dissemination of graphic literature and images shocked the public and forced it to come face to face with the cruelty inherent in Western culture's treatment of animals. Newkirk believes that, decades later, "the popularity of animal rights revived vegetarianism in America" (Iacobbo and Iacobbo 199), and PETA's ability—controversial as it has been—to force people to recognize that their food once had a face was largely responsible for this shift. Also during the 1980s, even as the sale of chicken products increased, "sales of beef slumped," and "ethnic cuisine, traditionally prepared with vegetables or grains, and a much smaller portion of meat than Americans were typically accustomed to, or none at all, started to increase in demand" (Iacobbo and Iacobbo 196). This interest in non-Western cuisine marked a moment of culinary multiculturalism that allowed many Americans, for the first time, to consider dietary options other than those that were typically standard American. Sushi was the rage on the West Coast, and Japanese and Chinese food thrived in the United States during this period. Furthermore, John Robbins published *Diet for a New America* in 1987, and this work linked meat consumption with environmental destruction in ways that allowed Americans to consider that meat eating, animal cruelty, and environmental devastation are inherently connected in ways that jeopardize human existence.

If the 1980s constituted a good decade for vegetarianism, the 1990s were perhaps even better, ushered in by "a flood of scientific evidence supporting vegan diets" (Iacobbo and Iacobbo 209) as healthier than their omnivorous or even vegetarian counterparts. In this regard, the work of Caleb Johnson and Dean Ornish was influential and its impact long-lasting. In 1990 Carol J. Adams published the aforementioned *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*, an ecofeminist work that examined the linkages between the exploitation of animals and the exploitation of women and advocated for veganism as a feminist act. Like the work of John Robbins, Adams's work restored the Jacksonian tendency to view various social movements as interrelated. In 1991 the four food groups, recommended by the U.S. Department of Agriculture since 1956, received an overhaul led by Neal Barnard, MD, founder of the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine; Barnard's model relegated both "meat and dairy to optional status" (Iacobbo and Iacobbo 211). This recommendation was made after decades of research by Barnard and other physicians, namely, T. Colin Campbell, Oliver Alabaster, and Denis Burkitt, that effectively proved "the health benefits of vegan foods" (212) and the detrimental aspects of consuming meat. When the new food pyramid was released in 1992, however, meat and dairy had been restored (after pressure from the meat and dairy industries), but these categories were still marginalized in comparison to the status that they had held in the previous food group guide.[5]

During this same period, veganism entered mainstream and popular culture in ways that depicted that lifestyle in a sympathetic light. In 1995 *Babe*, directed by Chris Noonan and starring James Cromwell, who became outspokenly vegan while acting in that film, was released and, in its anthropomorphic depiction of farm animals, caused viewers across the country to stop eating them. Howard Lyman, author of *Mad Cowboy: Plain Truth from a Cattle Rancher Who Won't Eat Meat*, appeared on *Oprah* in 1996 and explained to America why and how he, a fourth-generation cattle rancher, became vegan. Lyman and Winfrey, who declared during the broadcast that she had eaten her last hamburger, were subsequently sued for libel by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association for antibeef comments made during the broadcast.[6] And in 2000 Rod Lurie's film *The Contender*, which I discuss in a subsequent chapter of this study, portrayed a female vegan political contender for the office of vice president of the United States as a heroic champion of American values.

Veganism's Post-9/11 Backlash

On September 20, 2001, then-president George W. Bush addressed a joint session of Congress in response to the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon that took place on September 11 of that year. In a speech that constituted his declaration of War on Terror, the president designated Al-Qaeda a terrorist organization distinct in its beliefs from the rest of the Muslim world and an organization capable of "evil and destruction." The rhetoric Bush employed in the speech established a clear divide between "Americans" as champions of freedom, and terrorists, an ill-defined, looming menace comprised of anyone who would dare to attack us. Bush outlined the cause of the attack as hatred, stating that the terrorists "hate our freedoms: our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other," and he asked the rest of the world to choose a side: "Every nation in every region now has a decision to make: Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists" ("Transcript"). In establishing this "either/or" distinction, Bush left no room for alternatives, no way to negotiate a middle course that might recognize in the presumptive enemy a political and social ideology dependent upon anything other than hatred and evil. In creating what William D. Lutz terms a "rhetoric of permanent war and fear," the Bush administration established a political and social environment that lasted throughout his tenure as president and that continues to impact public discourse up to the present moment. In such an environment, to so much as question the binary established in this speech was to invite suspicion. A month later, the subsequent passage of the Patriot Act, which allowed the government heretofore unheard-of license with regard to surveillance of U.S.

citizens and detention of suspected terrorists, established a general erosion of privacy and civil liberties that further placed on lockdown any attempt at dissension.[7] During his September 20 speech, Bush offered a mandate: "I ask you to uphold the values of America," and in the wake of a changed world, we were left to posit continually and forcefully certain behavior as patriotic and American and just as vociferously to denounce anything that was not as aligned with terrorism. You were, after all, either with "us" or with the terrorists. You had to be an American with American values; you flew a flag, you were Christian, and most important to this study, you ate like an American.

Nation, religion, and diet all functioned as the criteria by which we posited our difference—our very humanity—from the animality of our attackers. Marc Redfield notes that "nationalism . . . works to cushion what Walter Benjamin calls the experience of shock" (4), and he reads Bush's declaration of the War on Terror as "the exemplary speech act of a sovereign power in a context in which sovereignty endures a kind of afterimage of itself, dispersed into mobile, legally ambiguous sites of incarceration, police action, and war, while the U.S. bid for global hegemony finds its demonized other in Al-Qaeda-style terrorism" (5). We were American, and they were "Al-Qaeda." We were good, and they were evil. We were Christian, and they were Muslim. We ate like Americans, and they ate according to the dictates of Islam, which expressly forbids the ingestion of pork and requires strict adherence to halal standards of animal slaughter. We are humans. They are animals. The logic that enables the division of identities into binary oppositions also enables the dehumanization, exploitation, colonization, and destruction of the subordinate term in the dualism, as is evidenced by the sharp rise in hate crimes against Muslims after 9/11. In the wake of 9/11, the FBI's annual statistical report "showed a 1,600 percent increase in reported hate crimes against Muslims from 2000 to 2001" (Schevitz)—a rise from 28 incidents in 2000 to 481 in 2001. According to Michael Welch, "crimes motivated by prejudice in the wake of 9/11 ranged from property damage and bigoted graffiti to serious assaults and homicide" (75). Anyone who looked Muslim could be the victim of such assaults, because in the United States, "Muslim" became a homogenizing yet vague identity category inaccurately ascribed to numerous non-Caucasian citizens post-9/11. For example, Mark Stroman shot and killed Indian store owner Vasudev Patel, noting that his anger after 9/11 "caused him to attack any store owner who appeared to be Muslim" (63).

In the years after the 9/11 attacks, the vitriolic rhetoric that dehumanizes Muslims is still prevalent. When a Muslim community center, wrongly referred to in the press as a mosque,[8] was proposed to be built near ground zero, as late as 2010 Mark Williams, conservative talk-show host and chairman of the Tea Party Express, vented his outrage as follows: "The monument would consist of a mosque for the worship of the terrorists' monkey god."

He referred to potential visitors to the mosque as the "animals of allah" (qtd. in Roth). And in 2013 once-Republican presidential contender Mike Huckabee referred to Muslims as "uncorked animals" during an interview with Fox News (Wing). The rhetorical treatment of Muslims as animals positions them, within an ideology that considers animals less worthy of rights and protections than humans, in a precarious position that allows for the removal of their human rights, as evidenced in the seemingly endless detention of hundreds of prisoners—who have never been charged with anything—at Guantánamo Bay and the torture of Iraqi prisoners by American troops at Abu Ghraib prison in 2003. According to the *Washington Post*, "U.S. intelligence personnel ordered military dog handlers at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq to use unmuzzled dogs to frighten and intimidate detainees during interrogations," and this use was "a plan approved by the highest-ranking military intelligence officer at the facility, according to sworn statements the handlers provided to military investigators" (White and Higham A01). Furthermore, it is unlikely that anyone in the United States was able to avoid seeing photos of former Abu Ghraib prison guard Lynndie England "tying a dog leash to a naked Iraq prisoner, and smiling with another soldier as they posed behind a picture of naked men dog piled on one another wearing hoods" (Tilford).

Lynndie England with prisoner at the Abu Ghraib prison on October 24, 2003. Associated Press.

The torture of prisoners with animals and the literal and figurative treatment of prisoners (and, for that matter, anyone presumed to be Muslim) as animals reinforces the species divide that ethical veganism, ecofeminism, posthumanism, and critical animal studies in different ways all seek to challenge. And the assertion of both the rhetorical and literal inferiority of nonhuman animals and the association of animality with Muslim peoples since 9/11 has impacted our dietary choices as well. In the wake of the attacks, first responders, police officers, and firefighters, many of whom lost their lives as they rushed in to maintain order and help those in need, were regarded as heroes, and a sudden profound reverence for our "blue-collar" labor force emerged as the work of searching for survivors, carting away debris, and rebuilding lower Manhattan filled our television screens. In addition, Americans turned to so-called comfort foods to feel better, and they shied away from expensive restaurants, many of which served ethnic cuisine. According to Brian Gallagher, after the attacks, "restaurants focusing on simple, familiar

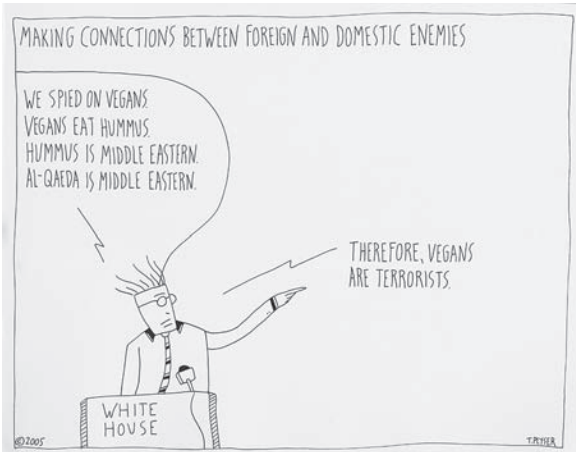
and hearty food—though often rendered in an upscaled and inventive way—would become the culinary zeitgeist." Gallagher notes the popularity of such items as fried chicken, macaroni and cheese, and hamburgers in the decade that followed the attacks and that in terms of dining out, people "wanted places that felt, in terms of scale, much more like home."

While the desire for comfort foods makes psychological sense, other shifts in terms of our culture's relationship with food were clearly the product of the rhetoric of fear espoused by the Bush administration; for example, in an act of outright xenophobia that remained intact until 2006, when France refused to support the United States' 2003 invasion of Iraq—a direct result of the September 11 attacks—Republican lawmakers, following the lead of North Carolina–based restaurant Cubbies, retaliated by renaming French fries "freedom fries" on cafeteria menus in three House office buildings (Loughlin), and this change was emulated by other restaurant owners in the private sector. In an article published in 2011, Michele Payn-Knoper discusses the potential dangers associated with the fact that the United States imports 40 percent of its food: "At a time that Americans are so sensitive about our national security, do we really want to rely on other countries for the majority of our food? Consider what's happened to oil and our gas prices; it makes no sense to have our food 'held hostage.' Yet, the increasing regulations, lack of understanding about today's modern farm and constant scrutiny of American agriculture is pushing more food production out of the U.S. and Canada." Given such post-9/11 sentiment with regard to the sanctity and nature of "American" food, it should not seem odd or even outrageous to consider that our current understanding of veganism in the United States has been likewise impacted and shaped by the Bush administration's rhetorical response to the attacks.

While awareness of vegetarianism and veganism has continued to rise in the United States since the 1990s, prompting even the most recalcitrant aspects of our culture to make some concessions and accommodations (even Burger King saw fit to start offering a veggie burger in 2002), there was a pronounced shift in the discourse of veganism at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Even prior to the 2001 attacks, chef Anthony Bourdain aligned vegans with anti-American terrorism in his wildly successful 2000 exposé *Kitchen Confidential*: "Vegetarians, and their Hezbollah-like splinter faction, the vegans, are a persistent irritant to any chef worth a damn. . . . Vegetarians are the enemy of everything good and decent in the human spirit, and an affront to all I stand for, the pure enjoyment of food. The body, these waterheads imagine, is a temple that should not be polluted by animal protein. It's healthier, they insist, though every vegetarian waiter I've worked with is brought down by any rumor of a cold" (70). Hezbollah, an Islamic militant group that formed in Lebanon and has been active since

1982, is considered a terrorist organization by the United States. Bourdain is famous for his disdain of the nonomnivorous in general and of vegans in particular, and his incendiary claims about them are oft quoted.[9] Bourdain's association of veganism with terrorism, however, situated veganism (a decidedly pacifist ideology) as dangerously, violently radical, a behavior that posed a destructive threat to any sane conception of diet. In this construction, vegetarians and vegans are the "enemy" of the very "human spirit." After the advent of the so-called War on Terror, terms like "Jihad," "Al-Qaeda," and the omnipresent and pervasive "terrorist" flooded the mainstream U.S. vernacular, part and parcel of a political rhetoric that divided the world into the simplistic categories of good and evil. Bourdain's construction of vegans as terrorists suddenly signified in a different and more ominous way.

Within the United States, behavior that deviated from a supposed standard—nonnormative behavior that had been tolerated prior to 9/11—was suddenly viewed with suspicion, and as I have already noted, Muslims in America were suddenly and violently targeted.[10] A color-coded terrorist alert system and such "voluntary" citizen surveillance programs as "See Something, Say Something" and the "Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting Initiative" created a state of both heightened awareness and heightened suspicion. While Bourdain's comments about vegetarians and vegans might have been easily dismissed prior to September 11, 2001, they proved somewhat prescient in terms of the way that nonnormative dietary choices were treated as potentially hostile acts after it. And Bourdain reiterated his point after the terrorist attacks. While in Philadelphia on a book tour promoting his 2007 release *No Reservations*, Bourdain said that vegetarians "are the worst kind of terrorists. And they must be stopped" (qtd. in Valocchi), asserting again—and this time in a post–September 11 world—that not eating meat constitutes an act of terrorism of the "worst" kind. In the years since that statement, the supposed connection between cruelty-free diets and terrorism has played out in startling ways. For example, a *Village Voice* article by Matt



"Making Connections between Foreign and Domestic Enemies," by Tony Peyser, cartoonist, poet, and columnist, Altadena, Calif.

Snyders chronicles the FBI's solicitation of informants to monitor protest groups during the 2008 Republican National Convention in St. Paul, Minnesota. Snyders discusses the case of Paul Carroll,[11] a student at the University of Minnesota who was approached by the FBI. According to Snyders, "what they were looking for, Carroll says, was an informant—someone to show up at 'vegan potlucks' throughout the Twin Cities and rub shoulders with RNC protestors, schmoozing his way into their inner circles, then reporting back to the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force, a partnership between multiple federal agencies and state and local law enforcement." Snyder quotes attorney Jordan Kushner, who notes that "the Joint Terrorism Task Force is another example of using the buzzword 'terrorism' as a basis to clamp down on people's freedoms and push forward a more authoritarian government." Veganism, as a nonnormative dietary choice in the United States, represented an ideology at odds with an increasingly authoritarian regime; in this case, it became associated with protest, dissent, Muslim dietary dictates, and terrorism and had to be covertly monitored.

In 2009 police in the U.K. secretly investigated 47,000 suspicious travelers who booked flights into and out of Britain. These travelers were red flagged "as potential terrorists [for such things as] ordering a vegetarian meal, asking for an over-wing seat and travelling with a foreign-born husband or wife" (Lewis). Travelers were selected via a terrorist detector database that was introduced by Britain's Labor Party, yet the system, which cost over a billion pounds to implement, "has never led to the arrest of a terrorist" (Lewis). Also in 2009 the FBI for the first time placed an animal-rights activist, Daniel Andreas San Diego, on its most wanted list. San Diego, who is still at large and was the first domestic terrorist to appear on the list, is accused of bombing two corporate offices in California in 2003—both of which were associated with animal testing—causing property damage but no loss of life. In the slew of media coverage that followed his placement on the list, San Diego's status as a "strict vegan" (Frieden) was highlighted. The headline of a 2011 article in *Boston* magazine reads "Violent, Vegan Animal Rights Terrorist Suspected in Northampton," and in a Fox News article, Joseph Abrams says, "San Diego's bespectacled face masks a violent hate that authorities say turned him into an eco-terrorist, a vicious vegan with an ax to grind." To be clear, discussing the media's coverage of San Diego's veganism is in no way to advocate for his methods; San Diego's actions are reprehensible and antithetical to the predominant ideology that, I would argue, influences most people who opt for a vegan lifestyle. But in their coverage of the San Diego case, the FBI and the media have depicted him alliteratively as a "violent," "vicious" "vegan," and like Anthony Bourdain, they have linked veganism not to an alternative lifestyle but to terrorism in ways that elide veganism with violent extremism.

As America has continued to fight its seemingly never-ending War on Terror and as we have shifted from one administration to another, at least some of the paranoia and fear that gripped the nation in the wake of the September 11, 2001, attacks has abated. But the rhetoric that the Bush administration employed immediately after those attacks established a pervasive and still-extant need to clarify certain behavior as patriotic and American while denouncing anything that did not comfortably fit that "us" not "them" model as not only un-American but anti-American, as behavior that might underscore and complement a terrorist threat, and as behavior that must be closely monitored, even if such monitoring violates basic civil liberties. Veganism, which had enjoyed a mild and even at times positive reception during the preceding two decades, became at the dawn of the twenty-first century suspect in its sudden associations with fundamentalism, radicalism, and antigovernment protest; in its deviation from the Standard American Diet (SAD), it appeared alien and dangerously ethnic, influenced by the dietary and political ideologies of the non-Western world. To be vegan was to be un-American, and it was to be rhetorically and literally elided with terrorism.

The subsequent coverage of and cultural response to veganism has generated a discourse that has largely maintained veganism's status as a now vaguely threatening fringe movement or has undermined that status by working to disempower veganism and vegans by rendering them as silly, inconsistent in their practice, and uninformed in their ethical and dietary choices. But in the second decade of the twenty-first century, an alternate discourse of veganism as empowering, health supportive, and even sexy has begun to emerge as if to counter the more negative rhetoric of the preceding period. It seems clear, at this point in our culture's history, that the discourse of veganism is constantly evolving, changing, and being shaped by a multitude of social and political factors, situated as it is in a highly connected world where communication is instantaneous and shaped by social media, Internet-based memes, and immediate access to information. In the next chapter, I read the discourse of veganism in the period preceding 9/11 up to the present moment through the lens of its treatment within various texts that imagine our most famous dark others, vampires.

CHAPTER 2

Vegan Vampires

The Politics of Drinking Humans and Animals in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Twilight*, and *True Blood*

> "I used to fancy that life was a positive and perpetual entity, and that by consuming a multitude of live things . . . one might indefinitely prolong life."
>
> —R. M. RENFIELD, in Bram Stoker, *Dracula*

It is, of course, impossible to discuss any representation of vampires in Western culture without referencing Bram Stoker's 1897 novel *Dracula*. In fact, it is largely—if not wholly—because of Stoker's novel that "vampires belong to a modern popular folklore that few will admit to believing but that has become part of a way of thinking about and ordering our vision of the world around us" (Hallab 9). The veritable cottage industry that is the production of literary criticism about *Dracula* has provided a vast array of theoretical readings of Stoker's vampire's symbolic significance within the context of Victorian era England.[1] As Mary Y. Hallab notes, Dracula has been read as "the tyranny of patriarchy, the power of the corrupt aristocracy or the nouveau bourgeois capitalists; he represents decadent foreigners, Slavs or Jews; he is a homosexual, a social outcast, even a mother, and he is dangerously erotic" (2). Critics have read *Dracula* through every theoretical lens imaginable, from psychoanalytic, to Marxist, to feminist, to queer, to postcolonial, and the continued persistence of scholarship about the novel points to its literary, cultural, and psychological significance.

In this multiplicity of perspectives, there is but one scholarly essay that examines the novel's politics of consumption via a vegetarian critical lens. The humorously titled "Love at First Beet: Vegetarian Critical Theory Meats *Dracula*," a 1996 piece by J. E. D. Stavick, explores the novel in terms of the ways that the character of Dracula, in that he consumes carnivores, disrupts the food hierarchy present in Western culture, one that "privileges bloody meat, especially beef, over all other food" (24). Stavick's essay draws on the vegetarian critical theories of such authors as Julia Twigg and Carol J. Adams in order to trace the novel's subversion of a Victorian politics of meat—of which protagonist Jonathan Harker is very much a part, as he chronicles from the very beginning of the novel the kind of meat he eats as he travels toward

and inhabits Dracula's castle.[2] Through an analysis of the ways that Dracula consumes those who consume meat, Stavick posits a vegetarian theoretical argument influenced by both Marxist and postcolonial theories: "The threat to English consumption is the threat of reverse colonization, which in this text is manifested in the vampire invasion of England by the powerful consumer 'Other,' Count Dracula, who threatens England with his violation of the meat hierarchy" (26). Taking Stoker's *Dracula*—and Stavick's vegetarian critical theorizing of it—as my starting point, I want to examine the vegetarian and vegan politics that are both implicitly and explicitly present in three contemporary popular cultural representations of vampires, Joss Whedon's television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003), Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* saga (2005–8), and Alan Ball's HBO series *True Blood* (2008–14, based on a series of novels, the Southern Vampire Mysteries, by Charlaine Harris).

If to be posthuman, as Cary Wolfe notes, is to exist in a historical moment that is located both before *and* after humanism, in a space where "the decentering of the human by its imbrication in technical, medical, informatics, and economic networks is increasingly impossible to ignore" (xv), it is also to exist in a moment of recognition that "eating one another and developing indigestion [is] only one kind of transformative merger practice; living critters form consortia in a baroque medley of inter- and intra-actions" (Haraway 31). The "vegan" vampire as I define it is a mythological creature who complicates our understanding of both veganism (the practice of eschewing animal products from human diets) and vampires (creatures that subsist on human blood). As Maggie Parke and Natalie Wilson note of the vampires in *Twilight*, such creatures are "'post-vampires'—or vampires that re-work traditional conceptions of the supernatural figure" (3). They, like their posthuman counterparts, are constituted by their imbrication in technological and economic networks; such situating allows these vampires access to factory-farmed and hunted animal blood (in the case of *Buffy* and *Twilight*) and artificial blood formulated originally in Japan (in the case of *True Blood*).

And these creatures are also (with the exception of the early seasons of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*) post-9/11 manifestations of our culture's continued grappling with the complexities of reductively defining one human population as "good" and another as "evil." According to Todd Atchison, our post-9/11 "obsession with vampire culture . . . delivers a presence in absence, a living with no future; or the dominant ideology of American democracy that results in a capitalist feudal state" (148). Rebecca Housel sees the proliferation of vampire narratives post-9/11 as similar to the surge of superhero films that followed the attacks. She says that such narratives are popular because "people are looking for escapist entertainment that reclaims some sense of agency and power over the impermanence in life that's been so exaggerated . . . with things like the situation in the Middle East" (qtd. in Morris). Deborah Mutch discusses Meyer's *Twilight* series and Harris's

Sookie Stackhouse novels, noting that these are works that extend "the trope of the vampire as a site of national anxiety to a globalised, post-9/11 context where national identity is renegotiated and transformed" (75). In these post-9/11 narratives, our vampires allow us to cast pacifism, veganism, and conscience—characteristics heretofore associated with their human prey—in shadow.

The figure of the vampire has existed throughout history in a multitude of cultures; as Nina Auerbach notes, "Vampires are easy to stereotype, but it is their variety that makes them survivors" (1). Similarly, Mary Y. Hallab claims that "the vampire's most human quality—its infinite adaptability to people, place, and time—is a major reason for its persistence" (5). Auerbach's 1997 study *Our Vampires, Ourselves* is perhaps the authoritative text on British and U.S.-based depictions of vampires from their first literary manifestation in John William Polidori's 1816 creation of Lord Ruthven to their filmic depictions in the 1990s. Auerbach notes that "what vampires are in any given generation is what I am and what my times have become" (1), and she notes a distinct shift in their depiction with Stoker's *Dracula*: "In England (at least until the coming of Dracula), vampires offered an intimacy that threatened the sanctioned distance of class relationships and the hallowed authority of husbands and fathers. Before Dracula, vampires were dangerously close friends" (6). Dracula, however, "quarantined vampires from their human prey, foreclosing friendship and opening the door to the power hungry predators so congenial to the twentieth century" (7).

Joan Gordon and Veronica Hollinger, in their introduction to *Blood Read*, note that Anne Rice's 1976 novel *Interview with the Vampire* marks another shift in the history of the Western vampire archetype. At this point, vampires have been domesticated and are portrayed in the final decades of the twentieth century "with an empathy that would have been unthinkable in earlier decades" (2). At the end of that century and in the twenty-first-century world, however, vampires have reconstituted that uneasy friendship that existed between their species and humans before Dracula, even as they have sought to "come out of the coffin" (as per Bill Compton in *True Blood*) or to constitute a "new combination of undead chum and unnaturally attentive lover, a sort of guardian angel with fangs" (Tyree 32)—as per the aptly named Angel on *Buffy* and the overbearing Edward Cullen in the *Twilight* saga. While in *Interview with the Vampire* Rice's outsider, the empathetic Louis, seeks a kind of humanity that his maker, Lestat, continually denies is his birthright (or, perhaps, "deathright"), his fictional descendants seek cohabitation with—but not assimilation into—the human world. According to Milly Williamson, "Anne Rice's vampires were the first overtly sympathetic vampires to be depicted in English fiction" (292), but by the time we get to *True Blood*, vampires have grown tired of their domestication—and they seek to domesticate humans, treating them more like pets than livestock.

The vampires that populate these later narratives (with the clear exception of the Cullens of the *Twilight* saga) are beings who are tired of their domestication and want social recognition *as* vampires—even as they want the same rights afforded to humans. The decision *not* to drink blood, therefore, is subversive both to human beliefs about vampires and, within the fictional worlds of these narratives, to the vampires who continue, as they have always done, to consume and kill their human prey. Conversely, as vampires have in some ways become more human in these narratives, humans have also become more vampiric. Perhaps we no longer need, in an unconscious sense, bloodthirsty monsters to constitute our shadow selves; in the United States, at least, a culture more and more comfortable with representations of real and fictional violence, perhaps we need models of nonviolent consumption that constitute a clear impossibility. Our vampires are vegetarian or vegan and pacifist—or, perhaps more aptly, they *perform* such identities—because in a post-9/11 world, we are not; veganism, in many ways, is monstrous, alienating and antithetical to a cultural dietary discourse in which meat and blood are of central significance. Furthermore, given meat's heterosexual masculinist connotations—a form of sexism that, as Adams notes, "recapitulates . . . class distinctions with an added twist: a mythology permeates all classes that meat is a masculine food and meat eating a male activity" (*Sexual Politics* 48)—male vampiric eschewing of blood is an especially symbolically loaded designation that queers such readings.[3] The fact that all the vegetarian and vegan vampires of note in the contemporary depictions discussed herein are male allows for a reading of such characters as a destabilizing cultural affront to both a more mainstream acceptance of violent masculinity (as a video game and film staple) and to commercial depictions of appropriate male and female consumption.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer: *Double Meat and Spoiler Vegans*

Perhaps no popular cultural vampire phenomenon has gained the kind of scholarly following that can be attributed to Joss Whedon's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (*BtVS*) series, which aired on WB from 1997 to 2001 and on UPN from 2001 to 2003. In addition to the Whedon Study Association's online scholarly journal *Slayage* and biennial conference, there exist numerous edited collections and monograph studies that theorize the so-called Buffyverse from a plethora of scholarly perspectives.[4] *BtVS* is particularly noteworthy for the way that it disrupts the more traditional narrative of dangerous vampiric masculinity and female victimization. In *BtVS* the "television series is premised on the novelty of a California valley girl who kicks ass, literally" (Owen 25), a girl, Buffy Summers (Sarah Michelle Gellar), whose "social

and political powers . . . are matrilineal" (24). Slayers are always female, and, despite the fact that the show never overtly articulates it, according to A. Susan Owen, "the narrative implies that the slayers are initiated at menarche" (25), a point that, in an affront to more traditional vampire mythology, allows the flow of blood from the female body to empower and not to drain. Furthermore, the show engages with a postfeminist politics of ambiguity that complicates simple binary readings of the characters as either one thing or another. As Elana Levine notes, "Buffy is simultaneously a fierce, fearless (feminist?) vampire slayer and an insecurity-ridden (conventionally feminine) young woman. . . . [The show] extends its conceptions of femininity beyond gender-specific terms by considering the multiple identity positions occupied by nearly all of its characters. Thus, . . . the character of Angel is both a bloodthirsty vampire and a heroic, loving protector of humanity" (174). In many ways, with the exception of two characters, Angel (David Boreanaz) and Spike (James Marsters), vampires and vampirism function in *BtVS* more as a uniform and persistent background menace over which Buffy consistently triumphs than as a kind of "other" suitable for psychological and social engagement. In Angel and Spike, however, both the audience and Buffy must confront the attraction of the menace and the seduction of the monster, as well as the politics of power and consumption that shape a narrative where vampires can—at least in special circumstances—possess souls, a characteristic that requires them, by virtue of the acceptance of a human moral code, to avoid drinking human blood.

Despite the show's ability to highlight the "intersections of postfeminism, postmodernity, and vampire narrative" (Owen 24), however, throughout *Buffy* there are few if any references to vegetarian or veganism that are not disparaging, and neither the term "vegetarian" nor "vegan" is ever used to describe vampires like Angel who refrain from drinking human blood. In fact, the only mention of the word "vegan" is in reference to "Buffy spoiler vegan," fan jargon designating a viewer who does not want to read any spoiler information for episodes of the show that she or he has not watched.[5] Despite this lack of an overt politics of meat within the fabric of the show, it is necessary to foreground my discussion of *Twilight* and *True Blood*, where the vegetarian discourse is much more explicit, by examining the way that *BtVS* establishes, perhaps for the first time, the possibility of true coexistence, friendship, and (nonconsumptive) intimacy between two species, vampires and humans. The binary divide that so infuses these two species in *BtVS*'s literary precursors is, from the very beginning of the series, complicated by Buffy's relationship with Angel. There are good and bad vampires in the Buffyverse, although such terms are loose and shifting, and as the slayer, Buffy is chosen to decimate the largely nameless and faceless vampire population of fictional Sunnydale, California.

Jeffrey C. Pasley notes that in the Buffyverse, "mercy and the chance for rehabilitation are offered even to the most depraved beings, such as lawyers and (defanged) vampires" (255). Angel, once the notoriously sadistic vampire Angelus, becomes "good" as the result of a curse that restores his soul. He does not kill humans and subsists largely (when the show alludes to his consumption at all) on pig's blood. But when he has sex with Buffy and experiences true happiness, he reverts immediately to Angelus, his previous rapacious self. He dies as Angelus at the end of the second season only to be reborn as Angel at the beginning of the third—and later to have his own eponymous show. For Angel to remain good requires that Angel remain celibate. Buffy's second vampire lover, Spike, like Angel, is initially "cursed" with goodness; a microchip implanted in his brain keeps him from being able to kill humans, but he later grapples with his own morality and receives his soul—at his own request—during the show's final season. He fights alongside Buffy and her friends, even seemingly giving his life for Buffy in the series finale.[6] Unlike her forced celibate relationship with Angel, Buffy's relationship with Spike is anything but platonic.

While both Angel and Spike drink pig's blood, neither *BtVS* nor *Angel* really engages in any meaningful way with the politics of vampiric consumption of animals in the stead of humans except to note that the choice to drink animal and not human blood is a characteristic that elevates the moral character of the vampire in question even as it never truly satisfies the vampiric thirst. Historically, such consumption has signified both weakness and empathy; in *Dracula*, Renfield, although he is not a "real" vampire, is forced to feed on small creatures—spiders, flies, and rats—because he has no access to larger creatures or humans, while in *Interview with the Vampire*, Lestat chastises Louie, calling him a "whining coward of a vampire who prowls the night killing alley cats and rats" (50) instead of humans. In *Buffy*, pig's blood may sustain Angel and Spike, but it is hardly a fulfilling or satisfying option. In the episode "Sleep Tight" during the third season of *Angel*, Angel realizes that his pig's blood has been spiked with human blood. He observes, "It's—it's pig's blood. The last batch just seemed so much more . . . tasty." In the episode "Something Blue" during the fourth season of *Buffy*, Buffy and her watcher, Giles, question Spike in order to determine whether he is, as Giles says, "impotent." When Buffy notes that Spike is not talking because

Spike (James Marsters) and Angel (David Boreanaz) in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

he might be too comfy, Spike responds, "Comfy? I'm chained in a bathtub drinking pig's blood from a novelty mug. Doesn't rank huge in the Zagat Guide [which rates the world's best restaurants]." In the case of both Angel and Spike, drinking the blood of an animal and not a human is indicative of impotence: Angel, the "most sexualized and eroticized of all the characters" (Owen 27), cannot have sex or he will become Angelus. Spike's microchip keeps him from being able to kill humans and causes Giles to refer to him as an "impotent" "helpless creature" ("Something Blue").

In his examination of the politics of the Buffyverse, Pasley notes the ways that the series embraced a liberal but not radical political ideology. The series' positive portrayal of the lesbian relationship between Willow (Alyson Hannigan) and Tara (Amber Benson) and its explicit focus on female empowerment, for example, point to its progressive nature, even as its depiction of its empowered female protagonist as a petite blonde beauty enforces white heterosexual norms. Pasley claims that Buffy is a superhero, and the "superhero concept has always been liberal, rather than radical, at heart" (265). The character of Superman "pioneered the code that most costumed heroes came to live by in later years: he avoided the use of firearms, protected helpless creatures at all costs, and never killed human beings" (265). In Pasley's reading, both Buffy and Angel are superheroes in the tradition of Superman, so while they may engage in a liberal and left-leaning politics, the idea that the "helpless creatures" they protect should also constitute nonhuman (and nonvampire and nondemon) animals is beyond the purview of the genre's conventions, even as those conventions are malleable enough to accommodate much nonnormativity and to press the boundaries of other contemporary social regulations. While the show never engages directly with the rhetoric of animal rights, there are two episodes in which a discourse of ethical vegetarianism is tacitly invoked: season 3's ninth episode, "The Wish," and season 6's twelfth episode, "Doublemeat Palace."

In "The Wish," popular Sunnydale High School fashionista and "it girl" Cordelia Chase (Charisma Carpenter) wishes that Buffy had never come to Sunnydale. When the wish is granted by a vengeance demon named Anyanka (Emma Caufield), Cordelia finds herself in an alternative Sunnydale, where vampires—including Cordelia's ex-boyfriend, Xander (Nicholas Brendan), and Buffy's best friend, Willow—rule, Angel is the victim of Willow's torture, and humans live in abject fear.[7] The final battle scene in the episode takes place in the Master's abattoir, a facility into which humans are herded, stunned with a cattle prod, and drained of their blood via metal implements that are inserted into their bodies at various points. While watching the inaugural run of this mechanized harvesting, Xander observes, "We really are living in a golden age," in response to the Master's claim that "humans have brought us a truly demonic concept, mass production." In "The Wish," the

treatment of human beings as cattle is immediately apparent: the captured victims stand in pens, looking out from behind wooden fencing; a cattle prod is used to subdue any resistance; and bodies are processed along a conveyor belt. The fact that the initial victim is female and that her body is penetrated at various points by metal implements alludes to the reality of what Adams refers to as "the exploitation of the reproductive processes of female animals" (*Sexual Politics* 21), which oppresses female animals in two ways. First, female animals are exploited via human consumption of milk and eggs, or what Adams refers to as "feminized protein," and second, "the majority of animals eaten are adult females and children" (21). In "The Wish," the implements that pierce the flesh of this first female victim evoke, in their shape and function, the electronic machinery used in the industrial milking of cows and highlight the connection of vampiric blood drinking and human consumption of factory-farmed cow's milk. That these phallic implements also ultimately drain this woman to death so that the Master can drink her blood from a wine glass establishes a distance between the consumer and the object of consumption: in this narrative, as in the mechanized factory-farm process for which it stands, the vampire and human are removed, via the introduction of the intermediary machinery of mass production, from the act of killing and from any face-to-face interaction with the subject rendered consumable by the process.

At the end of "The Wish," amidst a battle that results in the death of Angel, Xander, Willow, and Buffy, Giles summons Anyanka and entreats her to return the world to the way it was prior to her enactment of Cordelia's wish.[8] Giles's request to return to the "real world" is countered by Anya, who claims, "This is the real world now. This is the one we made." While this fictional world is primarily concerned with the exploitation of humans at the hands of vampires, the episode treats metaphorically the very real world politics of factory farming and the moral implications for the detached and mechanized consumption of animals by humans. Three seasons later, *BtVS* engages again with the politics of meat in "Doublemeat Palace," an episode that teases the audience with the possibility that the Doublemeat Medley (the product of "what happens when a cow and a chicken get together"), served at the fast-food restaurant Doublemeat Palace, Buffy's place of employment, may be made of murdered humans.[9] The fast-food restaurant is rendered as a place of mechanized horror, the workers depicted as identically dressed zombies functioning mindlessly at repetitive tasks that never vary. The mood is ominous, and Spike notes, "This place'll kill you," even before employees start to go missing. When Buffy is first hired, she must watch a video that offers insight into the "harvesting" of the meat, and she tries to downplay the horror of what she sees, noting her amazement at "how the cow and the chicken come together even though they've never met. It's like *Sleepless in*

Seattle if Meg and Tom were, like, minced." But the video that she sees is, as Buffy notes, so "graphic with the slaughter" that she visibly recoils when the manager presents her with a Doublemeat Medley. Buffy notes that when her coworkers start to disappear—a scenario that her boss claims is "whatever always happens," thus normalizing the regular turnover of fast-food employees—"maybe it's just the video that's creeping me out, with the cow and the chicken all swirly together."

In a moment that pays homage to Richard Fleischer's 1973 film *Soylent Green*, a narrative about high-energy vegetable-based food that turns out to be made of human flesh, Buffy, convinced that her coworkers are being killed, processed as meat, and served to customers, runs through the restaurant yelling, "It's not meat! It's people!" As it turns out, however, Willow deduces that the "meat" is actually "something called processed vegetables." The secret ingredient—something repeatedly referred to as the "process"—is in fact meat: when Buffy confronts Loraine, the new manager, about her discovery, Loraine admits that the "meat" in question is processed vegetable protein flavored with "beef fat." She cautions Buffy, warning her that "the Doublemeat reputation is built on a foundation of meat. You can't spread this around."

Despite the episode's reputation as one of the worst of *BtVS*, it is possible to read "Doublemeat Palace" as subversive in its engagement with the politics of meat. In fact, in an interview in the *New York Times*, when asked if there was anything that he had wanted to do on the show but could not because the budget or network TV standards would not allow it, Joss Whedon stated, "The only thing that we've ever actually been stopped or asked to stop doing was the fast food run. When Buffy worked at the fast food joint it made the advertisers very twitchy. So apparently the most controversial thing we ever had on Buffy was a hamburger and chicken sandwich" ("10 Questions"). Buffy must keep the "valuable secret" of the medley's ingredients from the general public, who, as Loraine indicates, believe the lie of so-called Doublemeat, even as she keeps another secret, that of her sexual relationship with Spike. To be physically involved with Spike, her once archnemesis, is to engage with all that she despises, and even as he strives to be a better "person," she finds her attraction to him appalling. But the Doublemeat lie—that the meat in the sandwich is, in fact, meat—underscores the show's engagement with, if not the complete unmaking of standard and accepted human and nonhuman identity categories, at least an undermining of them. Meat turns out not to be meat, and at least some vampires do not drink human blood. And the slayer can embrace, if only in secret, the monster she is chosen to despise and destroy.

Twilight and What It Means to Be a Vegetarian Vampire in Forks

In the introduction to her edited collection *Bringing Light to Twilight*, Giselle Liza Anatol discusses the runaway popularity of Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* saga:

> Of the myriad books, television programs, and films about vampires that have flooded U.S. culture at the start of the twenty-first century, the most commercially successful to date is the *Twilight* series. . . . Between the publication of the first novel *Twilight* (2005), and June 2010 . . . the four-volume saga had sold more than 100 million copies. The initial installment was the best-selling book of 2008; the fourth and final narrative, *Breaking Dawn*, sold 1.3 million copies on the first day alone. (1)

The four-volume saga, narrated in the first person by the protagonist, Bella Swan, and set in the real location of Forks, Washington, chronicles the relationship between human high school student (and later vampire) Bella and her vampire boyfriend (and later husband), Edward Cullen. The Cullen clan, consisting of "parents" Carlisle and Esme and "children" Alice, Emmett, Rosalie, and Jasper, live in harmony with the human population of Forks, the majority of whom do not know that the Cullens are vampires. These vampires are assimilationist in their motives, even as their vampirism gives each of them superhuman strength and unique abilities; for example, Edward is able to read human thoughts (with the exception of Bella's), while Alice is able to see the future.

Unlike their literary predecessors, who sleep during the day and stalk at night, these vampires are unharmed by sunlight, a quality that allows them to do things like hold regular jobs and attend high school.[10] In fact, they have chosen to inhabit the Pacific Northwest because of its overcast and rainy nature, a quality that ensures that their white, diamond-like surfaces do not sparkle and betray their undead status, as is the case when they are viewed in direct sunlight. Of Edward's status during a sunset, Bella notes, "He looked into the sun—the light of the setting orb glittered off his skin in ruby-tinged sparkles" (*Twilight* 287). Whereas on *BtVS* Angel and Spike are initially forced to be "good," nonhuman killing vampires, the Cullens, like Louis in *Interview with the Vampire*, consciously decide not only not to feed on and kill humans but, unlike Louis, also to live among and help them. Carlisle, a physician, is so skilled at not engaging in the bloodlust his species naturally feels that he is able to treat and heal humans whose blood flows from various wounds. And Edward consistently saves Bella from an array of near-fatal experiences—even though nearly all of them tend to be, directly or indirectly, his fault.

According to Leonard Sax, "the allure of *Twilight* lies in its combination of modern sensibility and ambience with traditional ideas about gender," and the franchise, in terms of both Meyer's novels and their film adaptations, has been a source of much debate with regard to the gendered and conservative politics that it presents. In many ways, Bella is the antithesis to Buffy; she is the consistently virginal damsel in distress to Buffy's sexually promiscuous lack of victimhood. Of the film version of the first volume of the series, Dana Stevens notes, "Bella Swan (Kristen Stewart) is the anti-Buffy; she's a mortal high-school girl committed not to slaying vampires but to being slain by them." Meyer is a practicing Mormon who attended Brigham Young University, and Margaret M. Toscano notes that "most critics have connected Meyer's Mormonism to her characters' conservative morality—no pre-marital sex, no abortion, no swearing, no smoking, no drinking" (21). While Toscano reads Meyer's work as an affront to the tenets of the Church of Latter Day Saints in two significant ways ("first, she invariably puts love before obedience; and second, she rejects the principle that moral purity is maintained by exclusion, by the avoidance of even the appearance of evil" [21]), there has been much codified debate and concern with the ways that Meyer's Bella represents a problematic and outdated model for young women.

Sax notes that in *Twilight*, the lead males—Edward Cullen and Bella's secondary love interest, the werewolf Jacob Black—"are muscular and unwaveringly brave, while Bella and the other girls bake cookies, make supper for the men and hold all-female slumber parties." Furthermore, "it gets worse for feminists: Bella is regularly threatened with violence . . . and in every instance she is rescued by Edward or Jacob." Sarah Summers has examined the ways that young women have negotiated and defined *Twilight*'s gendered politics via Internet discussion threads, particularly one called "Twilight is so antifeminist that I want to cry," which as of 2009 "contained over 490 posts and has consistently been within the 15 most popular of over 600 discussion threads about the novel." In addition to the fact that Bella is rescued by Edward repeatedly, she is put in harm's way by him repeatedly as well—and he even leaves her in the second volume, *New Moon*, as a way of "protecting" her from himself. During his absence, Bella's voice vanishes from the novel, which presents Bella's state of mind as a series of blank pages; Bella cannot, it seems, speak without Edward, and her voice is completely silenced in his absence. To get him back, she does all manner of reckless things—riding and wrecking a motorcycle, jumping off a cliff—hoping to force him to materialize when he senses, as he is able to do, that she is in danger. It is such circumstances that have led some to contend that in addition to being antifeminist, *Twilight* advocates a narrative of abuse, one dependent upon the withholding of male affection, dependence upon male protection, abandonment, phys-

ical and mental manipulation, and subsequent apologies for harmful male behavior, only for such behavior to be repeated ad nauseam over the course of hundreds of pages of narrative.[11]

I tend to concur with the sentiment that *Twilight*'s gender politics are problematic at best and decidedly antifeminist at worst, but my analysis is based on the way that the narrative engages in a kind of double-speak with regard to its treatment of various discourses of both power and consumption. For example, even as Meyer's novels attempt to portray Bella as someone tough and independent who is not "used to being taken care of" (*Twilight* 55), her very consistent need to be taken care of by Edward undermines such a depiction. And unlike *BtVS*'s minimal and tacit engagement with the politics of meat, in the context of the *Twilight* saga, the morality of the Cullen vampire clan is designated by its members' "vegetarian" status. In the context of *Twilight*, "vegetarian" means to eat animals—the very antithesis of its actual meaning—instead of humans. Edward explains that eating animals is like "living on tofu and soymilk; we call ourselves vegetarians, our own little inside joke. It doesn't completely satiate the hunger—or rather thirst. But it keeps us strong enough to resist. Most of the time" (188). While Edward acknowledges that the use of the term "vegetarian" constitutes a kind of joke, the comparison indicates that such a diet is inherently unfulfilling; tofu and soymilk may sustain vegetarian humans, but they—like the blood of animals on which the Cullens subsist—are poor substitutes for the "real thing." Such a position situates vegetarianism as an inferior and unsatisfying dietary option dependent upon privation, a diet that leaves the vegetarian with an insatiable craving for what has been omitted: bloody meat.

Jean Kazez has written about the vegetarian ethics of *Twilight*, noting that "it's possible the Cullens subscribe to mainstream Western ideas about the status of animals—the idea that humans are in an exalted moral category, and the idea that animals exist to serve human purposes" (25–26); therefore, if Edward must kill, "it's better to kill a non-human animal" (27). Meyer's rewriting of vampire mythology strips vampires of their characteristic darkness and countercultural natures; these vampires like humans and want to be like them, so much so that they, as Kazez notes, ascribe to a human dietary code and consume what most humans (at least humans in the United States) consume, a diet centered around the bodies of animals. These vampires do not have fangs, they eschew sex before marriage, and they engage in a gender politics that keeps men and women in specific places in a very clearly delineated hierarchy.[12] But Meyer also lets us know that the Cullens are an anomaly; there are other vampires—those that constitute the majority—who are not in control of their "baser" lusts. In the fictional world of Meyer's Forks, there are vampires who kill humans and vampires who kill vampires. And simply being a vampire, even a very good and moral vampire, is criterion

enough to inspire hatred; the werewolf pack to which Jacob belongs despises the Cullens for their vampireness, even as the Cullens are not, in my opinion, very good at being vampires.

If Meyer's novels provide us with a vampiric discourse that undermines both vampires and vegetarians, Kazez notes that "the movie version of *Twilight* . . . puts Edward's vampire vegetarianism in an interesting light, since Bella is vegetarian too—the regular kind" (26). Within the context of the film, directed by Catherine Hardwicke, although she never explicitly claims to be a vegetarian, Bella eats a vegetarian diet, although this is not the case in the novels. Hardwicke herself is a vegetarian, stating in an interview, "I've been vegetarian since I was 17, so I've always had a lot of energy" (qtd. in Olivieri). She is a noted environmentalist whose sustainable vegetable garden was featured in the March 2010 issue of *Garden Design* magazine.[13] Hardwicke's choice to portray Bella as vegetarian significantly impacts and in some ways challenges the problematic vegetarian discourse of Meyer's novels. Hardwicke's film draws consistent attention to what Bella eats; in a café with her father, the server shoos away a former acquaintance of Bella's, saying, "Let the girl eat her garden burger," and later, during Bella and Edward's (Robert Pattinson) first date, another server sets a plate of food before Bella and announces "one mushroom ravioli." At school, Bella makes a salad; at home, she criticizes her father for eating steak. Meyer appears in a cameo as another restaurant patron in the scene during which Bella receives her garden burger; Meyer is served a veggie plate. Hardwicke has stated on MTV that having Meyer eat a veggie plate was a "little bit of an inside joke," a nod to Meyer's writing the Cullens as vegetarian, but, given her own status as a vegetarian, the impact of the "joke" can be read as something much more political—and her choice to write Bella as vegetarian generated significant public discourse about vegetarianism more generally.

Celebuzz named Kristen Stewart one of the "hottest celebrity vegetarians" of 2011 despite a variety of sources—including interviews with Stewart herself—to the contrary.[14] Dana Steven's review of the film for *Slate* compares Robert Pattinson's Edward to vocally vegetarian ex-Smith's front man Morrissey, noting that "he spends his days glaring at [Bella] with Morrissey-like intensity" prior to "suddenly sav[ing] her from an impending car crash with what seems like inhuman strength and speed, then return[ing] to insulting and ignoring her." And in the discourse surrounding real and fake vegetarian celebrity, the line between fact and fiction is also blurred, as fans continue to speculate as to whether Stewart, like the characters she portrays, is vegetarian as well and as bloggers criticize Pattinson for not being a vegetarian like the vampire he plays in the films.[15] In Meyer's creation of vegetarian vampires that are actually carnivores—as well as in Hardwicke's depiction of Bella as a vegetarian—the natures of both vampirism and vegetarianism become muddled and con-

tradictory to the point that neither signifier actually means *what it means*. Not being a cannibal does not make one a "vegetarian," just as simply being pale and cold does not—or perhaps should not—make one a "vampire." There are criteria that must be met in both cases, and in the context of the Cullens, those criteria are consistently and explicitly ignored. But Meyer's revisionist vampire story also presents us with a kind of salvation narrative, one that is completely dependent upon the politics of diet, even as the politics in question are highly problematic. Such salvation—if we buy it—also requires that we question the nature of the seemingly inherent evil that has historically characterized vampires.

In the extremely secular world of *BtVS*, Angel and Spike are nonetheless given souls, something denied to vampires heretofore, even as their status as soul-bearing vampires is anomalous. But in the world of *Twilight*, Edward claims that he is going to Hell and consistently denies that he possesses a soul. He even tells Bella that he "will not destroy" her soul (*New Moon* 518) by granting her wish and turning her into a vampire. If vampires constitute our shadow selves, then what of the soulless Cullens and their system of highly evolved ethics? Perhaps our shadow selves have become a kind of undead moral majority, repressed and socially excommunicated traditionalists who call for a return to a sense of "values" most of us seem to have lost. Being a real vegetarian, then, is something caught up in the kind of thinking that considers rights in ways that allow for a perceived slip into moral degradation characterized by such "liberal" vices as sexual promiscuity, feminism, and secularism. Within the context of her novels, Meyer's narrative asks that we consider that which we have, as a culture, chosen to dismantle: a presumed more traditional approach to sexuality, to faith, and, ultimately, to diet. And given the success of the franchise, casting such values in shadow has had an undeniable and overwhelming allure. If the most soulless and, therefore, most inherently evil of all beings can maintain a moral code that should, by most Judeo-Christian systems of thought, allow for salvation, then our inability to embrace that same code is nothing short of blasphemous.

But Hardwicke does something quite different in a film that very cleverly casts vegetarian vampires in a much more complex light, and I want to provide a close reading of the film's opening scene as a narrative that directly speaks back to Meyer's misappropriation of the term "vegetarian." The film opens with Bella's voice-over stating that she had never given much thought to how she would die, "but dying in the place of someone I love seems like a good way to go," just prior to a clip of a deer fleeing through a forest only to be caught by Edward. We do not see the vampire drink the animal's blood; the scene ends in a flash just as the vampire catches the deer. Given the so-called vegetarian nature of Edward's vampirism, the scene requires a bit of scrutiny. Bella's statement about self-sacrifice to save someone else is situated at the

beginning of the film, before the audience sees Bella on screen, and before the audience even knows definitively that the voice is Bella's. The screen is black when the voice says, "I'd never given much thought to how I would die"; the forest then emerges from the darkness, and the camera focuses on a deer drinking from a stream. Bella's voice returns as we watch the deer: "But dying in the place of someone I love seems like a good way to go."

The camera suddenly moves closer, and the startled deer looks up and runs. The audience watches the deer's vain attempt to escape, and the scene ends with Edward catching the deer in an embrace as the screen goes white. The tacit implication is that the voice that we hear is the voice of the animal, "dying in the place" of someone else, in this case, Bella or some other human being. As Katie Kapurch notes, "Bella's voiceover . . . suggests that her female voice corresponds with the deer, who, sensing an intruder, begins to flee" (187). This opening scene situates animal sacrifice at the fore of the narrative, positioning the death of the animal as a central focus of the film, even as it is not a central focus of the novels. That Bella is depicted as a *real* vegetarian thereafter—and that Hardwicke essentially has Meyer eat her words by having her eat a veggie plate—serves as an affront to the narrative's primary and very Judeo-Christian assertion that anything or anyone must die in place of anything else.

Vegan Vamps and Vampiric Humans: The Nature of True Blood

Charlaine Harris's Southern Vampire novels, which serve as the basis for Alan Ball's HBO series *True Blood*, begin with the 2001 *Dead until Dark*. The narrator and protagonist of the series, Sookie Stackhouse, notes at the beginning of the novel, "Ever since vampires came out of the coffin (as they laughingly put it) four years ago, I'd hoped one would come to Bon Temps. We had all other minorities in our little town—why not the newest, the legally recognized undead? But rural Louisiana wasn't too tempting to vampires, apparently; on the other hand, New Orleans was a real center for them—the whole Anne Rice thing, right?" (1). This introduction does several things in its playful engagement with the politics of extant vampire tradition, civil rights, and queer identity. First, Harris speaks directly to her literary predecessor Anne Rice, and, in so doing, she acknowledges the fictional status of both Rice's and her vampire narratives. Second, within the realm of such self-aware fiction, Harris establishes a space in which to engage a discourse of legal recognition and minority rights, specifically gay rights, as is made manifest in the notion that vampires have come "out of the coffin."[16] In the context of Harris's novels, vampirism becomes an identity category subject to the rhetoric of politically correct–speak; vampirism is no longer the condition of being

the shadow "other" but is instead a viral condition—like AIDS—that leaves the victim "apparently dead for a couple of days and thereafter allergic to sunlight, silver, and garlic" (2).

This narrative of apparent vampire normalization is entirely dependent upon the Japanese creation of synthetic blood, which, according to Sookie, "kept the vampires up to par in terms of nutrition, but didn't really satisfy their hunger, which is why there were 'Unfortunate Incidents' from time to time," with such "incidents" being "vampire speak for the bloody slaying of a human" (*Dead* 4). As in both the *BtVS* and *Twilight* narratives, in *Dead until Dark* it is possible for vampires not to drink human blood in Bon Temps, but such an option requires that vampires remain unsatisfied and unsatiated. But unlike those two other narratives, the acceptance of Harris's and Ball's vampires within mainstream society is dependent upon their being vegan, drinking synthetic—neither human nor animal—blood; veganism, an identity category that functions to render human beings un-American outsiders, functions in an opposite way within vampire culture to allow vampires access to and acceptance by the same human community.

Advertisement for HBO's *True Blood*.

According to Jamie J. Weinman, *True Blood* "was supposed to be *Twilight* for grownups" (56). Indeed, the show's explicit portrayal of hetero- and homosexual sex allows for "a crossover element of B-movie soft-core" porn (Tyree 32). Despite the fact that Anna Paquin's Sookie Stackhouse has more in common with Sarah Michelle Gellar's Buffy Summers than with Kristen Stewart's Bella Swan, *True Blood* and *Twilight* share more similarities in terms of characterization and plot.[17] Both contain telepathic characters (Sookie in *True Blood* and Edward in *Twilight*); both contain smoking hot werewolves (Joe Manganiello's Alcide in *True Blood* and Taylor Lautner's Jacob Black in *Twilight*) who compete with Sookie's and Bella's vampire suitors. The similarities between the two narratives have even led to accusations of plagiarism against Meyer, who, bloggers claim, copied Harris's fiction in order to create a G-rated version of an extant story.[18] Ball's HBO adaptation of Harris's work, *True Blood*, in the six seasons that it was on the air, has provided, via the lens of melodramatic camp, a sustained if uneven examination of the politics of assimilation and exclusion of specific U.S. communities based on gender, race, sexual orientation, and species. J. M. Tyree notes that the horror of *True Blood* becomes fully apparent late in season 1, "when Sookie's brother Jason (Ryan Kwanten)

and his sociopathic vegan girlfriend Amy Burley (Lizzy Caplan), kidnap, and finally kill a kindly older vampire, Eddie Gauthier (Stephen Root)" (34). In its first season, via a sustained critique of the supposed nonexploitative nature of veganism, the series questions the traditional vampire/human dynamic in that it examines violence that is "inflicted *on* and not by vampires" (34).

I will examine several episodes of the first season of *True Blood*, specifically those that feature Jason Stackhouse's vegan girlfriend, Amy Burley. These episodes, unlike the other texts examined in this chapter, engage in an overt way with the concept of veganism as they situate veganism within a discourse of unstable and paradoxical assimilationist identity categories based on sexuality, species, and the politics of consumption. According to Bruce A. McClelland, "*True Blood* does not redefine the vampire's habits or needs, but instead refocuses the vampire *community* and the politics of its interaction with the human community" (81). The concept of community and of vampires' ability, because of the creation of synthetic blood, to "mainstream," or to be accepted into the human community, is of crucial importance within the context of *True Blood*, as the narrative places characters within specific communities (queer, human, animal, vampire) that become destabilized over the course of the first season. From the very beginning of the series, vampires are "out" as vampires, but many other characters remain "closeted" in terms of their distinctive natures. Late in the season, for example, Sam Merlotte (Sam Trammell) discloses to Sookie that he is a shifter, a creature able to turn into nonhuman animals at will, and we learn that the unassuming Rene Lenier (Michael Raymond-James) is the serial killer whose deeds have been blamed on Jason Stackhouse. Sookie is an outsider to the "mainstream" human community because she has telepathic abilities—and she acknowledges these from the very beginning, making no attempt to keep her difference hidden.

Similarly, according to Tyree, "At its most complex, the show focuses on the dynamic gay character of Lafayette Reynolds . . . , an unpredictable, irrepressible, and impish figure, a short-order cook, male prostitute, and drug dealer whose disruptive intelligence upends any neat parable of assimilation" (34). Lafayette Reynolds (Nelson Ellis), black, tough, and elaborately gay, disrupts the social order and functions as a representation of all that is feared within the fictional world of Bon Temps and within the real United States more broadly. As the lover and V (vampire blood) supplier to state senator David Finch (John Prosky), a politician adamantly against the Vampire Rights Amendment—who claims on television that drinking the blood of vampires "turns our children into addicts, drug dealers, and homosexuals" ("To Love Is to Bury")—Lafayette, as exemplified by his confrontation at a rally of Finch's hypocritical stance, consistently undermines the appearance-conscious world in which he exists, a world in which conformity is of the utmost importance but that also consistently exposes the duplicitous nature of that conformity.

Conversely, by playing the role of ascetics (eating a vegan diet and fighting for the right to marry their human love interests rather than live "in sin" with them), the vampires who seek mainstream status in the world of *True Blood* manipulate the human obsession with conservative American appearances that Lafayette exposes. But both openly gay Lafayette and puritanical vampires like Bill (Stephen Moyer) serve the same rhetorical purpose within the world of the show: they posit that the very socially conservative politics championed by the likes of Finch more often than not function only at the surface. What lies beneath a seemingly virtuous appearance—and veganism is part of this surface—is much darker indeed.

The positioning of the show's living and undead characters within shifting and uncertain political and social communities works to generate a third space of signification and articulation that is at once a product of the status quo even as it challenges and reveals the contradictory and often dishonest nature of a supposed human and vampire norm. If the vampires on *True Blood* seek integration into the human community, they do so as vampires, a community with a distinct social and political order, even as they carefully mimic human behavior.[19] The presence of three types of blood, "human (with its various blood groups), vampire (V), and synthetic (TruBlood)" (McClelland 84), disrupts the heretofore oppositional either/or of the human/vampire species binary—and perhaps the United States / terrorist binary as well—a relationship dependent upon the destruction of one species for the preservation of the other. The synthetic vegan option, TruBlood, is a destabilizing factor, and Bruce McClelland notes that "the commercial availability of a nutritional and palliative substance, TruBlood . . . , which quells the animalistic hunger for human blood sufficiently to allow vampires to enter human social situations without issue, is at base also a means of obtaining control through technology" (83). In McClelland's reading, TruBlood functions as a "bribe" made by humans to vampires, and, ultimately, the substance is a trap: "It draws the vampire out from his place of opposition shifting a natural need away from its original object and towards dependency on the illusory benefit of consumption-based communion with human beings" (87). While I see the logic of such a reading, I do not agree with it. My sense is that the vampires on *True Blood* make a mockery of such communion, drinking TruBlood in public and human blood from willing human donors behind closed doors. If vampires succumb to the bribe offered by human beings, TruBlood becomes a tool utilized by vampires to construct a veneer of appropriate humanity, and drinking it allows vampires to bribe humans, to make proper appearances that allow them to circulate—often dangerously—within the purview of human institutions and to disrupt human communities.

Therefore, TruBlood, the vegan alternative to human blood, is a surface gesture that works, by and large, within a culture that pays more attention to

appearances than to substance, a culture filled with humans who posture, perform, and deny specific identity positions in order to be safe in a world that requires lock-step conformity only to adopt those positions, as Finch does, in private. Vampires understand this aspect of human nature; after all, they were once human as well, and their intimate knowledge of human behavior allows them to capitalize on the very human tendency to live divergent private and public lives. Vampires may keep TruBlood in the fridge, just as, like the duplicitous Nan Flanagan (Jessica Tuck)—whose public appearance invokes Hillary Clinton while her private wardrobe consists of leather and spikes—they may be members of the mainstream American Vampire League, but more often than not, they feed on human beings as well, betraying their seeming ethical vampire veganism. And certain "fang-banging" humans offer themselves as willing participants in the vampiric feeding, which is tantamount to sexual climax for both parties. Within the consensual encounters between humans and vampires on *True Blood*, blood drinking is unmasked for what it has historically always been within vampire mythology—sex—but in the context of *True Blood*, other aspects of human behavior remain more deeply in shadow. And just as vegetarianism in *Twilight* signifies its complete opposite, the death of animals, veganism in *True Blood* is a meticulously deconstructed performance, a visual screen that offers a veneer of peace and, for the human character of Amy Burley, functions as a mask for violent and murderous consumption. Furthermore, while vampires are ostensibly vegan, humans, even vegan humans like Amy Burley, are drinking the blood of vampires. Veganism, then, becomes, in the context of *True Blood*, as performative as any other identity category, a position that masks the true nature of the so-called vegan.

In the first episode, "Strange Love," Nan Flanagan, in an interview with Bill Moyers, tells her human constituent, "I can assure you that every member of our community is drinking synthetic blood." The falsity of this assertion, that vampires are "mainstreaming," becomes apparent over the course of the show's subsequent episodes; *some* vampires are drinking TruBlood in public and feeding on (often willing) human beings in private, particularly within the context of Fangtasia, the Shreveport vampire bar presided over by Eric Northman (Alexander Skarsgård), sheriff of Area Five. The first episode establishes the performative nature of vampire and human existence in Bon Temps, a place where humans pretend to be vampires while vampires seek to "mainstream," a posturing that allows them dangerous access to humans. In the very first scene, a young heterosexual couple stops at a convenience store that purports to sell TruBlood; the two are curious about vampires and question the man behind the counter, a human Goth who pretends he is a vampire. The redneck buying beer (which, upon closer inspection, is TruBlood) is the real vampire, and he reveals his identity by telling the clerk, "If you pre-

tend to be one of us again, I'll kill you." Right from the start, the show reveals that things are not as they seem. So when Bill Compton orders TruBlood from Sookie, and she tells him no, that Merlotte's does not have any, as there have been no vampires at the restaurant since vampires came out of the coffin, we should be suspicious of Bill's motives. Sookie asks, "Anything else that you drink?" to which he answers, "Actually, no." Sookie's boss, Sam Merlotte, questions the honesty of this statement: "Are you willing to pass up all your favorite foods and spend the rest of your life drinking Slim Fast?" Here, as in *BtVS* and *Twilight*, a nonhuman blood diet is positioned as an unsatisfactory alternative to the real thing. A difference between *True Blood* and its predecessors, however, is its willingness not only to engage with a politics of desire that often conflicts with an ethical stance but to question the distinction between lived and performed ethics.

In essence, the vampires on *True Blood* do what vampires have *always* done: they behave immorally with regard to a human code of ethics.[20] But for the first time in vampire history, they employ the rhetoric of those ethics to appear sympathetic to humans. Unlike Angel, Spike, and Edward, who drink "vegetarian" animal blood out of some desire to "do the right thing," for the most part, the vampires on *True Blood* perform vegan identity to gain access to and the trust of the humans on which they feed. As Ariadne Blayde and George A. Dunn note, "If the rest of us can be persuaded that vampires are really just an exotic variety of human being—or at least close enough to be granted honorary human status—then we'll be more inclined to extend to them *human* rights" (34). Bill Compton may not drink anything other than TruBlood when we first meet him, but his vegan act of mainstreaming allows him access to a choice blood option, the fairy blood of Sookie, not much later in the season. Mainstreaming allows vampires to forge new relationships with humans, the lesser species on which they feed; instead of being livestock (as Pam, played by real-life vegan Kristen Bauer van Straten, says to Bill in "To Love Is to Bury," "You and your insane affection for stupid cattle"), in the world of Bon Temps, humans, not vampires, are domesticated by their willingness to accept appearances for the sake of appearance. They become pets (as Bill constantly says, "Sookie is mine") who willingly relinquish their civil rights and allow their owners to drink their blood. Such positioning challenges "the assumption that human beings occupy the highest rung on the great ladder of being" (Blayde and Dunn 41) even as it assures mainstreaming vampires protection via a human code of ethics; mainstreaming is a political strategy utilized by *True Blood*'s vampires to ensure not only their survival but also their human companion animals' loyalty should vampires be threatened with the true death by other less domesticated humans. Dogs, after all, rarely turn against their masters.

But if humans have risen from the status of farm animal to pet in vampire ideology, alternately, vampires have become consumable to humans who drain them and sell their blood, a practice Blayde and Dunn compare to the fur trade in terms of its ethical implications (37). Nan Flannagan asks, on network television, "Who is draining whom in America tonight?" ("Plaisir d'Amour"); as often as vampires drink consenting humans, humans abduct, torture, and drain unwilling vampires of their blood, which functions as an aphrodisiac and hallucinogen to the human consumer. In the show's first season's sustained and often overt disruption of the animal/human binary (Sam can be both human and animal; humans constitute "cattle" for vampires; and dehumanized and othered vampires are engaged in a constant battle for human rights), several episodes explicitly challenge the human mistreatment of nonhuman beings. On the one hand, the show reveals that "the allegedly evil actions of vampires differ not one scintilla from what we ourselves do all the time to our fellow creatures who suffer the misfortune of not being human" (Blayde and Dunn 42). But the episodes that feature Amy Burley, a woman who says to her vampire captive Eddie in "I Don't Wanna Know," "I'm an organic vegan, and my carbon footprint is minuscule," also presents human treatment of vampires as "not much different from the way millions of animals are treated every day on factory farms" (Blayde and Dunn 37). Amy's vegan identity is no accident and, like the vegan identity of the vampires in Bon Temps, is performative, contradictory, and qualified.

A member of Bill's former nest tells him in "Burning House of Love," "Mainstreaming's for pussies." Amy's statements about her diet in this same episode, in particular her vegan assertion that "plants give us all the chemicals we need," point to the actual truth behind the claim that mainstreaming for vampires and veganism for humans—getting "all the chemicals" one needs—do not necessarily equate to getting all that one *wants*. The human vegan Amy, like her mainstreaming vampire counterparts, drinks blood (in her case, blood from a vampire whom she tortures and keeps chained in Jason's basement) in order to fulfill a desire that is not quelled by a plant-based diet. And, as I have already said, if mainstreaming vegan vampires maintain in the press that they only drink TruBlood, they nonetheless consume the blood of humans whom they have domesticated. These various realities—vegan vampires who drink but do not kill willing human "donors," human vegans who torture and kill vampires, and vampires, like those from Bill's former nest, who do what vampires have always done, drink *and* kill humans—all circulate within the discourse of what constitutes rights and who (and what) should be granted rights within the world of *True Blood*. Amy Burley's centrality to the narrative arc of the show's first season and her character's continual references to her veganism in the face of her sadistic treat-

ment and murder of Eddie stand in contrast to Bill Compton's "vegan" diet, which he supplements with the blood of his willing lover, Sookie. Yet both scenarios posit relationships dependent upon the relegation of one member of the duality to the status of inhuman animal. Sookie may avoid being treated as cattle by Bill, but she is still his pet. And Eddie, a kindly vegan vampire, is rendered a factory-farmed animal by the ostensibly vegan Amy. In terms of its sustained deconstruction of the animal/human divide, *True Blood* examines the nature of what constitutes humanity and monstrosity: Eddie is rendered far more human than Amy, and Amy, in her torturous quest for his blood, is far more vampiric than Eddie.

The contradictory nature of Amy's veganism is apparent in "The Fourth Man in the Fire" when her claim that "I only eat organic" is countered by her consumption of vampire blood, a practice that she justifies to Jason, telling him that their captive, Eddie, "isn't a person" ("Plaisir d'Amour"). For Amy, evidence of Eddie's suffering does not inspire her to grant him the same ethical consideration that she extends to living human and nonhuman creatures; she is able to justify her treatment of Eddie because she views him as a thing—a dead thing—and not a person worthy of rights. Her vegan diet—and Amy is cognizant of such a position, ever conscious of her status as someone who eats "raw food, nothing processed" ("Plaisir d'Amour")—allows Amy to access the full potency of V. Therefore, veganism functions for Amy exactly as it functions for vampires, by providing access to nonvegan blood. By her logic, Amy can be a vegan and drink Eddie's blood because Eddie is not a living creature and because his blood is, therefore, not sustaining his life. Eddie calls her a "psychopath" and tells Jason, "She is far more dangerous than I could ever be" ("Plaisir d'Amour") because she does not recognize his suffering. When Jason, covertly supplying Eddie with TruBlood, confronts Amy and tries to free Eddie, Amy kills Eddie, ostensibly to keep him from killing his human captors.

Amy's ability to treat Eddie in this manner is based on rational justifications that are in direct opposition to the ecofeminist ethics of care that one might expect to inform the ideology of a person with Amy's supposed values. The care tradition developed with "difference" feminist Carol Gilligan's 1982 publication *In a Different Voice*. According to Josephine Donovan and Carol J. Adams, Gilligan's work defined a feminine conception of "'a morality of responsibility,' in contrast to [a] masculine 'morality of rights'" (2) that focuses on individualism rather than one's position in relation to others. Therefore, "the feminist care ethic . . . has rejected abstract rule-based principles in favor of situational, contextual ethics, allowing for a narrative of understanding of the particulars of a situation or issue" (2). In an ecofeminist framework, this ethics of care views animals as individuals to whom humans have moral obligations (3). Such an ethic requires that individual circum-

stances—and beings—be considered within a broad context of relationships and interactions. To assert that such a position is "feminine" as compared to "masculine" is not to assert essentialism but rather to recognize that in the world of Cartesian dualism in which we exist, certain behaviors attributed to men are lauded, while those believed to be feminine in nature are undermined. Difference feminism asks that those things typically associated with women be considered equally valuable.

But Amy does not consider Eddie an individual creature worthy of consideration, nor does she situate him in a specific narrative that allows him to exist in relationship with her. Her real motives become immediately clear: Amy's only reason for holding Eddie captive is the satisfaction that she gets from rendering him a consumable object, and the pleasure she derives from consuming his blood, at least in part, is dependent on his suffering and ultimate starvation. Jason notes that Amy has "done this before" and that Lafayette had been able to procure Eddie's blood without kidnapping him ("Plaisir d'Amour"). Despite her claims that Eddie is a "predator" ("I Don't Wanna Know"), it is Amy who is predatory and sadistic; her goal in kidnapping Eddie has more to do with the slow "true death" she hopes to inflict upon him than with consuming his blood. Despite her persistence in asserting that Eddie is not a person and is already dead, it is his very human suffering that gives her pleasure.

Jason Stackhouse (Ryan Kwanten) and Amy Burley (Lizzy Caplan) feed on Eddie Gauthier (Stephen Root) in HBO's *True Blood*.

Through the often explicit and sometimes tacit connections it makes between human veganism and vampiric consumption of synthetic blood, the first season of *True Blood* engages explicitly with a discourse of rights—animal, human, and queer—in a way that posits self-proclaimed identity categories as performative acts that function in the service of a political agenda. For mainstreaming vampires, that agenda is about self-preservation, companionship, and the cultivation of willing human donors. The explicit consumption of the vegan option, TruBlood, allows vampires access to human champions and human protections, even as these same vampires still remain subject to a code of ethics inaccessible to humans and often in direct conflict with human morality. For Amy, veganism functions both as the means by which she accesses the full potency of V and as the justification for her denial of rights to vampires: if Amy is a vegan who only eats plants, vampires, in that they are

neither human nor animal, for Amy, constitute no further moral consideration than she would grant to a soybean or a tomato. Her maintenance of her vegan status in the face of her cruel infliction of suffering on Eddie is a complete negation of his very existence as a creature worthy of rights, deserving of an existence devoid of suffering.

In a *Huffington Post* blog post titled "*True Blood* Is Making Me Want to Be a Vegan," independent producer Andrea Chalupa writes: "Every Sunday my friends come over, and I cook dinner. . . . Just as we're about to bite into our chicken pot pies, there's a blood bath on screen, one character ripping into a neck or crushing in a skull. . . . Eating meat and watching *True Blood* doesn't always sit well, so in the spirit of the conscientious Bill Compton, our Sundays have gone vegan, and no one is complaining." Indeed, watching one's species violently rendered as food for another on a show that engages so explicitly with the politics of diet can cause one to empathize on a visceral level with the species on which we dine. While all three of the vampire texts examined here, *BtVS*, *Twilight*, and *True Blood*, situate vampirism devoid of human blood as inherently unsatisfying and as potentially dangerous and posit that vampires have to work very hard and are often unsuccessful at fighting their desire to drink human blood, or else "Unfortunate Instances" (Harris 4) will occur, their engagement with the vampire other as a being not only worthy of consideration with regard to rights but also capable of granting rights to human beings, the species on which they feed, generates a productive lens through which to view the ethical consideration we grant other species. As Blayde and Dunn note, "Of course, if we conclude that all creatures, human or otherwise, have some inherent *dignity*, not just a market *price*, we face tough questions about what should go on our dinner plate and in our clothes closet. No one can make that decision for you. But if Bill Compton can get by on TruBlood, it probably wouldn't kill any of us to try a veggie burger" (47).

While Stoker's vampire kills and feeds without remorse on human beings, his late twentieth- and twenty-first-century counterparts—Angel, Edward Cullen, and Bill Compton—to varying degrees refuse this seemingly essential component of vampiric existence. If the figure of the vampire changes over time to accommodate whatever "our society shuns, but secretly demands" (Thorne 4), then vampires that eschew both murder and the consumption of human blood—and in the case of *True Blood*'s Bill Compton, animal blood as well—point, perhaps, to "our age's fantasies of non-exploitative tolerance" (Tyree 32). Such a trajectory indicates a cultural moment during which violence and cruelty constitute overt human characteristics that are no longer cast onto the shadow self of the vampire. In turn, the more humanized, humane, and often disingenuous figure of the vegetarian vampire situates pacifism and inclusivity—of other species and minority positions—as that which we have lost. A chronological examination of these three texts demon-

strates how the vegan/vegetarian vampire trope shifts over time, as well as how, with regard to this trinity of vampire narratives, the terms "vegan" and "vegetarian" initially signify weakness, asexuality, or asceticism. But even as they become further and further removed from their original meanings, by the time we get to *True Blood*, vegan vampirism constitutes a fraught, powerful, and manipulative political position that challenges and disrupts the hegemonic matrix of carnivorous, homophobic sexism prevalent in both *True Blood*'s fictional Bon Temps—where human beings reverse the discourse and consume vampires—and in the very real United States. In what follows, I turn from vampires to zombies in an examination of the way that two recent works of apocalyptic literature conceptualize food and consumption at the so-called end of the world.

CHAPTER 3

Vegan Zombies of the Apocalypse

McCarthy's *The Road* and Atwood's *The Year of the Flood*

Frank Kermode's *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (1967) posits that "apocalypse depends on a concord of imaginatively recorded past and imaginatively predicted future, achieved on behalf of us, who remain 'in the middest.' Its predictions, though fictive, *can* be taken literally" (8). Kermode's work, a foundational study of the nature of apocalyptic narrative, was written in the 1960s, a period in U.S. history and consciousness marked by an escalation of the Vietnam War and profound social change, and given an updated epilogue at the turn of the millennium, a moment particularly linked to apocalyptic thinking. Regardless of the time period, however, Kermode notes that "the apocalypse can flourish on its own, quite independently of millennia. In some form or another its terrors and apprehensions can threaten us at any time. The possibility of personal disaster is, after all, never quite absent from our lives, and if anything is needed to give additional substance to our anxieties, the world, at whatever period, will surely provide it" (182).

In our current historical moment, apocalyptic writing is concerned, as it has been throughout its history, with possible endings both engineered by human beings and resulting from natural phenomena; in term of crises brought about by human activity, of primary concern at present is human-engineered environmental devastation and the earth's backlash reactions to it (in the form of global warming and dramatic weather events), as well as the planet's increasing inability to support human and nonhuman life in the wake of environmental destruction. As Lawrence Buell notes, "Apocalypse is the single most powerful master metaphor that the contemporary environmental imagination has at its disposal" (qtd. in Garrard 93), and increasingly turbulent and extreme weather patterns, the resultant diminishment of the ice caps, drought conditions, and rising sea levels all lend themselves to apocalyptic thinking. Also, increasing population and decreasing resources, in terms of food, water, and land, contribute to apocalyptic anxiety. Finally, the possibility of nuclear holocaust, on the apocalyptic fictional radar since the United States dropped nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and heightened after September 11, 2001, when the United States invaded Iraq in

search of supposed weapons of mass destruction, continues as a pervasive fictional—and real—threat, even as the perceived sources of potential nuclear attack have changed.[1]

As we approached 2012, the supposed final year of the Mayan calendar, a plethora of apocalyptic fictions in the form of film, television, and novels pervaded popular culture and underscored a contemporary concern with what felt like an impending end of days. And beneath the fictional apocalyptic landscapes depicted in these works, there has emerged a pervasive subtext with regard to what and how one eats at the end of the world. In particular, the figure of the zombie, as wanton consumer and mindless cannibal driven by an unrelenting hunger, has reestablished a primary place in contemporary apocalyptic narratives.[2] Zombies, like the vampires I discussed in the previous chapter, are undead figures with a lengthy lineage who have functioned to highlight, satirize, and provide commentary on various social institutions over time, particularly with regard to blind consumerism. As David Flint notes, the rise of the modern zombie character began in 1968 with George A. Romero's film *Night of the Living Dead*, and the zombie outpaced the outdated, "over-exposed and corny" (7) vampires of the past as representations of modern fears. Zombies, an "unstoppable, expanding army of monsters who couldn't be reasoned with and who acted without feeling or emotion, seemed to capture a feeling of mass helplessness" (7), a sense of being out of control with regard to one's desires—desires marketed to and shared by seemingly everyone.

Unlike vampires, however, zombies are cannibals who *mindlessly* consume human flesh. While vampires have become increasingly human—or have at least historically grappled with their humanity—zombies have consistently lacked the ability to reason; they are driven by a thoughtless and amoral consumption and have served as ideal metaphors for an increasingly consumer-based culture that is often driven by unethical production models. Zombies may once have been human, but their lack of ethical introspection and wanton cannibalism exclude them from humanity. The zombie figure has even crossed the boundary between fiction and reality, occupying nonmetaphorical space, as in the case of (among other instances) the so-called Miami Zombie, Rudy Eugene, who cannibalized a homeless man on May 26, 2012, and whose girlfriend claimed that Eugene, who was part Haitian, might have been under the influence of a voodoo curse (see Green). The event and media coverage of it sparked a slew of articles that made reference to the beginning of an actual zombie apocalypse.[3]

Given that "the rhetoric of catastrophe tends to 'produce' the crisis it describes" (Garrard 105), it is worth examining the way that contemporary apocalyptic narratives engage with the politics of eating, food production, and ethical consumption in order to highlight how wanton consumption

could presumably lead to a kind of consumer zombification that might in turn lead to the end of the world. In his article "Fast Zombie / Slow Zombie: Food Writing, Horror Movies, and Agribusiness Apocalypse," Michael Newbury notes that in Danny Boyle's postapocalyptic zombie film, *28 Days Later* (2002), Jim (Cillian Murphy), the protagonist who wakes from a coma twenty-eight days after the zombie apocalypse begins, immediately drinks a Pepsi and is surrounded in the opening scenes of the film by various junk food items, "a cornucopia of corn syrup and snack foods with many polysyllabic additives and preservatives" (88). "Real" food—unprocessed and unpackaged—is nowhere to be found in the apocalyptic landscape of London nor, for that matter, in much of the world. Newbury further explores how the zombie film genre over the past decade considers food and "connect[s] in complicated ways to a much broader invocation of an industrial food apocalypse circulating in a rash of recent bestsellers, popular trade books, periodicals, and acclaimed film documentaries" (89).[4]

Frank (Brendon Gleeson) eyes irradiated apples in *28 Days Later*.

Ruben Fleischer's 2009 film *Zombieland* similarly alludes to what I am calling an industrial "food-pocalypse," this time by situating its zombie outbreak as the product of a mutant strain of mad cow disease, a virus that is contracted by eating meat. Tallahassee, played by real-life vegan and raw foodist Woody Harrelson, endlessly craves a fake, processed, and packaged food, Twinkies, a version of which was apparently specially made with vegan ingredients for Harrelson's on-screen consumption (see Hiskey). The film's subtext indicates that being carnivorous is the cause of zombification and, it would follow, the cause of the apocalypse itself. In this chapter, I want to examine two recent apocalyptic narratives, Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006) and Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood* (2009)—the second of three cotemporal novels that began with 2003's *Oryx and Crake* and ended with 2013's *MaddAddam*—in order to explore the ways that both narratives engage and complicate the zombie/cannibal metaphor via a narrative focus on food and the ethics of consumption in the postapocalyptic present featured in both works. Specifically, I am interested in the ways that the postapocalyptic landscapes depicted in these works—the vegetationless, barren, and dark wastes of *The Road* and the globally warmed, baked, and polluted earth of *The Year*

of the Flood—function to reduce consumption to one of two extremes, either vegan or cannibal, and the ways that both works deconstruct the language of marketing and consumption that exists prior to the "end of the world" that enables a societal dependence on specific kinds of food—meat and vegetable, real and "fake." If, as Mark Bosco suggests, "the apocalyptic orientation of contemporary literature . . . impels the reader to act, to direct the future by transforming the here and now" (158), these works specifically ask that we act with regard to how and what (and who) we eat before it is too late.

In *The Road*, the apocalyptic event is never named, but McCarthy has indicated that the catastrophe alluded to in the work is a meteor strike, an act of nature and not an act of humanity (see Kushner). At the moment of impact, "the clocks stopped at 1:17. A long shear of light and then a series of low concussions. He got up and went to the window. What is it? she said. He didn't answer. He went into the bathroom and threw the lightswitch but the power was already gone. A dull glow in the windowglass" (52). Whatever the cause of the catastrophe, the earth is rendered nearly unable to sustain any vegetation or animal life; as the narrator indicates, "Once in those early years [the man had] wakened in a barren wood and lay listening to flocks of migratory birds overhead in that bitter dark. . . . He wished them godspeed til they were gone. He never heard them again" (53). In the aftermath of the event, the barren, sunless planet offers up nothing green, and animal life perishes; the trees all die and fall, even though rivers still flow, filled with gray sludge and ash, devoid of fish. Most of the remaining humans have, in essence, become zombies, engaging in wanton, seemingly mindless acts of cannibalism in order to survive, traveling aimlessly, like denizens in Romero's mall, "shoppers in the commissaries of hell" (181), pushing rusted shopping carts filled with discarded remnants of the past world. As Susan Kollin notes, the landscape is littered "with the accumulated debris of twenty-first century consumer culture, a reminder of the excess and waste that marks daily life for many Americans" (160); the cannibals continue to participate in that economy, even as the only commodity left to consume is human flesh. The novel, "part ecodystopian fiction and part American road novel" (157), follows the journey of an unnamed man and his son—referred to throughout as "the boy"—who years after the apocalyptic event travel along a road to the coast in search of possible warmth and who refuse to participate in acts of cannibalism; as a result of this refusal, both remain on the brink of starvation throughout the novel.

The narrative, which explores the nature of what it means to be the "good guys" when the act of survival precludes traditional notions of goodness, makes continual reference to the fact that the man, dying at the beginning of the journey and dead at its end, and the boy "carry the fire," a "metaphor for the practice of civility and ethics" (Cooper 221); that is, they maintain an

outdated morality that has largely ceased to function in the "post-natural" and "post-capitalist" (Kollin 158) world of the postapocalyptic present. But in my reading, "carrying the fire" also means, at its most basic level, participating in a dietary ethic that is at odds with the present world of the narrative, a world stripped down to its most primary components. The politics of diet that are present in the preapocalyptic world haunt the present, as is evident when the man and boy find a supermarket—"a corporate cannibal that . . . drives specialized individualized traders out of business" (Donnelly 71)—and examine its contents. They first visit the produce section and find "a few ancient runner beans and what looked to have once been apricots, long dried to wrinkled effigies of themselves" (McCarthy 22). Produce has not survived, but fake, mass-produced chemical "food" is a different story. Just as Jim drinks Pepsi at the beginning of *28 Days Later*, the man finds a lone can of Coca Cola in a gutted soft-drink machine in the supermarket. The drink, likely nearly a decade old at this point, is still "really good" (23), and the man encourages his son to drink all of it, rebuffing his son's attempts to share the soda with him. The boy says, "It's because I wont ever get to drink another one, isnt it?" (24). "Coca Cola" is the only named fake food thing to eat in the entire novel, and according to Brian Donnelly, the destruction of humanity is described in "the same terms as those articulated in the Coke incident: a detrimentally excessive consumption finds both its apotheosis and its apocalypse in cannibalism, the utter and abject dissolution of recognizable society" (72).

The man (Viggo Mortensen) and the boy (Kody Smit-McPhee) in John Hillcoat's 2009 film adaptation of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*.

Just as the world of the novel has been stripped down to nearly nothing, much has been written about *The Road*'s stripped-down language, a convention that sets this novel apart in McCarthy's oeuvre and a mode appropriate to the reality it depicts. Characters, with the exception of the enigmatic antiprophet Ely, are nameless, and, as Ashley Kunsa says, "the fractured narrative structure, proliferation of sentence fragments, and brief, repetitive dialogue differentiate the novel from the rest of [McCarthy's] work" (68). Donovan Gwinner notes that "just as the narrative undermines systematic inquiry into being, so too does it powerfully stage a largely completed process of signs becoming irrevocably divorced from the things they represent, a dying

state of signification and meaning to match corporeal death" (143). Like the birds that circle and call only to vanish from the planet forever, the novel presents us with traces of printed language, words in books, on billboards, and on various consumer products that likewise assert themselves and then disappear. The boy and the man pass billboards on which warning messages have been scrawled, billboards "whited out with thin coats of paint in order to write on them. . . . [T]hrough the paint could be seen a pale palimpsest of advertisements for goods which no longer existed" (McCarthy 128). The man remembers standing in a ruined library, looking at "blackened books [lying] in pools of water. Shelves tipped over. Some rage at the lies arranged in their thousands row on row" (187).

In contrast to these lies, the dialogue between the man and the boy consists predominantly of short exchanges, punctuated by the word "okay," which takes on myriad meanings depending on the context in which it is uttered. For example, in an early exchange, the boy states that they are headed south "so we'll be warm." The man answers, "Yes," to which the boy replies, "Okay." The man asks for clarification: "Okay what?" to which the boy responds, "Nothing. Just okay" (McCarthy 10). In the same encounter, the word "okay" is invoked another three times, and each time, the word serves a different purpose. When the man tells the boy to "go to sleep," the boy answers, "Okay," indicating his intention to obey his father's request. When the man asks the boy if it is "okay" for him to blow out the lamp, the boy answers, "Yes. That's okay," indicating that he is prepared for the darkness that will ensue. And later, in the darkness, when the boy asks what his father would do if the boy died, the father answers, "I would want to die too." The boy asks, "So you could be with me?" to which the man responds, "Yes. So I could be with you." The boy's final "okay," in response to his father's answer, is the most enigmatic of all, marking, perhaps, a moment of understanding and acceptance of his father's position but as likely marking the boy's realization that he must survive in order to ensure his father's survival as well (10–11).

At one point when the man is unable to think of anything to say to the boy, the narrator notes "the world shrinking down about a raw core of parsible entities. The names of things slowly following those things into oblivion." The list of named items that follows is telling: "Colors. The names of birds. Things to eat. Finally the names of things one believed to be true. . . . The sacred idiom shorn of its referents and so of its reality" (McCarthy 89). The earth is a gray waste, devoid of color, and the names of birds become lost in a world that cannot support the existence of birds. That the names of "things to eat" fall away is, of course, indicative of the lack of food, which is a persistent theme throughout the work; that the loss of named food items is so closely followed by the loss of "the names of things one believed to be true" indicates a connection between an ethics ("things one believed to be true")

and food; that the man and boy do not eat humans (or dogs, the only other animal that appears, fleetingly, in the novel) in the postapocalyptic moment is an oddly vegetarian counter to a previous reality during which both man and boy ate other living creatures, as is apparent whenever they find canned food items, the food of the past, that contain meat. In the past world, they would have eaten animal meat; in the present, as no animals aside from humans seem to exist, survival is by and large minimalistically vegan. An ethics with regard to the consumption of food, then, along with a reevaluation of what constitutes food, emerges in the wake of the apocalypse, during which food becomes redefined, for most of the surviving humans, as other surviving—or farmed—humans.

The novel sets up a dichotomy between the "good guys," the boy and the man, who maintain a belief—however tenuous—in the divine, and the "bad guys," the cannibals, who, while they are not literal zombies (if there can be such a thing anyway), nonetheless engage in behavior associated with zombies: they remain voracious consumers, even in the face of the seeming absence of consumable items, and they keep slaves and impregnate women in order to eat their newly born infants. In its minute and excruciating attention to what the man and boy eat, the novel also stages an examination of the nature of "real" and "fake" foods, those things that were, prior to the end of the world, created in laboratories and packaged for consumption and those that grew in the outside preapocalyptic world, both of which are rendered nearly absent in the present moment of the narrative. And in its juxtaposition of the diet of the man and boy, which consists of whatever they can find (ancient desiccated apples, handfuls of dusty seeds, and, on two rare occasions, commercially and home-canned foods, including fruits in syrup, corned beef, and vegetables), with the diet of the cannibals, which consists of humans that they imprison like livestock and breed (at one point, the boy and man come across "a charred human infant headless and gutted and blackening on [a] spit" [198]), one of the novel's central concerns is clearly the man and boy's ethical imperative *not* to eat certain things and beings even in the face of nearly certain starvation. In this light, I want to reconsider Donnelly's assertion above about excessive consumption finding both its apocalypse and its apotheosis in cannibalism.

Being consumed by cannibals is a persistent threat to the boy and the man, and it is the reason that the boy's mother commits suicide. In a flashback, she says to the man, "Sooner or later they will catch us and they will kill us. They will rape me. They will rape him. They are going to rape us and kill us and eat us and you wont face it" (McCarthy 57). At one point, in search of food, the two unlock a cellar and find that "huddled against the back wall were naked people, male and female, all trying to hide. . . . On the mattress lay a man with his legs gone to the hip and the stumps of them blackened and burnt"

(110). Despite the people's pleas of "help us," the man and boy run. The boy consistently wants to help others, and when his father refuses to let him, he must repeatedly make sense of a world that will not allow for compassion. After the two have reached safety, the boy says to his father, "We couldnt help them because then they'd eat us too," to which his father replies, "Yes." The boy says a second time, "And that's why we couldnt help them." The man answers, "Yes," a second time, and the boy replies, "Okay" (127).

In his *An Intellectual History of Cannibalism*, Cătălin Avramescu asks whether or not cannibals are human beings. He notes, "That some humans have eaten the flesh of other humans is a fact that no one denies. However, the anthropology that historians recount is more often than not particular, the product of extreme circumstances: hunger, fury, religious enthusiasm. The individual must somehow leave the bounds of his species in order to touch forbidden nourishment" (85). The roving bands of cannibals that populate *The Road* have indeed left the bounds of their species; they have become something *inhuman*—zombies—insofar as humanity entails adhering to a code of behavior that finds the practice of consuming members of one's species a most abhorrent and immoral taboo. The man and boy and, later, the family that takes the boy in after his father dies indicate, by virtue of the fact that they "dont eat people" (McCarthy 284), the survival of humanity in the face of the cannibalistic rupture from humanity that occurs as a result of the decimation of food. If cannibalism is the end result of a mentality forged in the consumer-driven culture of late capitalist America, then the boy, having never known that culture (as he was born after the apocalypse), remains outside of that mentality; his ethos is shaped *after* the end of the world, and, perhaps surprisingly, he is the most ethically motivated character in the book because of that fact.

If eating humans is the only way to survive in the postapocalyptic world of *The Road*, then survival means eschewing the most foundational ethical tenet that human beings hold with regard to diet, that human beings do not eat other human beings. The cannibals that populate *The Road* are the purest of carnivores, and one could assume that survival on the devastated planet depicted in the novel would require that one be such a carnivore. However, the boy and man survive without succumbing to the cannibal taboo; in fact, they are rewarded—seemingly by divine intervention—for not eating other humans. Donovan Gwinner notes that "the core value of their goodness is affirmed explicitly after they escape the house in which six men and women reside and confine other people in the basement as livestock" (147). It is immediately after they flee and after the boy asserts his understanding of why they were unable to help the people in the basement that the two find an underground bunker, fully stocked with "crate upon crate of canned goods. Tomatoes, peaches, beans, apricots. Canned hams. Corned beef. Hundreds

of gallons of water" (McCarthy 138). The two stay in the bunker for several days, eating and getting warm; while they are there, the boy thanks the people who have left this miracle for them to find, saying, "We know that you saved [the food] for yourself and if you were here we wouldnt eat it no matter how hungry we were and we're sorry that you didnt get to eat it and we hope you're safe in heaven with God" (146). The boy's thanks indicate that not only will he and his father not eat other humans but they will not steal food from them either. Therefore, in the context of *The Road*, goodness is entirely dependent on what one eats; all other forms and acts of goodness that existed prior to the apocalypse are reduced to a singular ethical imperative about food: to be good is not to eat certain things, humans and food that belongs to other people.

Of course, there exists in the present-tense world of *The Road* a finite amount of canned and packaged food from the time before the end of the world, and most of what existed before has already been plundered and depleted by the time we reach the narrative present of the novel. Furthermore, the narrator indicates throughout the text that what life is left on the planet is headed for extinction. For example, at one point, the man "walked out in the gray light and stood and he saw for a brief moment the absolute truth of the world. The cold relentless circling of the intestate earth. Darkness implacable" (McCarthy 130). And later, the narrator says, "Perhaps in the world's destruction it would be possible at last to see how it was made. Oceans, mountains. The ponderous counterspectacle of things ceasing to be. The sweeping waste, hydroptic and coldly secular. The silence" (274). But despite all of the evidence to the contrary, the novel also offers a kind of hope that the future might hold something other than the choice between starvation or cannibalism. Dana Phillips points out the seeming ridiculousness of discussing "the end of the world" in the context of apocalyptic narratives in which life continues to exist: "While the world may have come to an end, the world is also the same as it ever was: filled with mortal perils, because it is shaped by causes the advent of which is pure chance, while the effects of these causes seem more or less deterministic" (173). The same questions that plague humans prior to the apocalypse persist after it, one of the primary being the nature of God. The man says early in the novel that "he only knew that the child was his warrant. He said: If he is not the word of God God never spoke" (McCarthy 5). For the man, the boy, whose consciousness is shaped by a world devoid of consumer capitalism, offers evidence of the divine, and grace and redemption are possible for humanity because the boy exists. Indeed, his survival seems a divine accident, an impossibility, and perhaps one should likely conclude that, given his current circumstances, he will not survive much longer.

The novel ends with a description of brook trout that once populated the planet prior to the apocalypse: "They smelled like moss in your hand. Polished

and muscular and torsional. On their backs were vermiculate patterns that were maps of the world in its becoming. Maps and mazes. Of a thing which could not be put back. Not made right again. In the deep glens where they lived all things were older than man and they hummed of mystery" (McCarthy 286–87). The trout, evoked here as creatures under the control of humans ("they smelled like moss in your hand"), fish that can be caught and, one assumes, eaten, are also creatures "older than man" whose bodies map the mystery of the world's creation. Their absence and the absence of seemingly all living creatures except humans also mark the absence of putting the earth back as it was before. But in its presentation of cannibalism and cruelty as the end result of that former world, the narrative remarks on a long-standing tradition of greed and excessive consumption that leads, if not to the disaster that ruined the planet, to the lack of empathy and wanton cruelty that mark its aftermath. Given these circumstances, why, one might ask, would one want to put the world back as it was before? Despite what appears to be an utterly bleak ending, a kind of divine intervention continually enables the boy to survive and to find goodness in others; he is rescued by more "good guys," a family—a man, woman, and child—after his father dies, and the woman "said the breath of God was in [the boy's] breath yet though it pass from man to man through all of time" (286). The continued belief in divinity—in God—and of God in the boy seems at clear odds with the hopelessness of the apparent circumstances, as does a moment early in the novel when the boy and his father find a patch of morels growing in the "mulch and ash" (40) beneath a burned rhododendron. The two eat the mushrooms, and the boy proclaims, "This is a good place Papa" (41). The existence of the mushrooms, edible vegetation that is somehow able to grow on the ruined earth, indicates the potential for a kind of survival that is not dependent on cannibalism, is not, in fact, dependent on carnivorousness. And maybe if there are still good places that can grow food (however minimal) and "good guys," then there is cause for hope, even at the end of the world.

Unlike *The Road*, Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood* is speculative fictional satire, and the novel focuses on a radical environmental group called the God's Gardeners, particularly two female members, Toby and Ren, who in some ways approximate a mother/daughter relationship to parallel the father/son of *The Road*. The two navigate the before and after of the so-called waterless flood, a biologically engineered apocalyptic event administered to the population at large via the BlyssPluss Pill, a drug marketed to enhance sex and protect against pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. An unacknowledged side effect, however, is that the pill is also lethal, containing a virus that is released simultaneously to all who have taken the drug. After the flood, the Gardeners, historically and emphatically vegan, reevaluate their dietary stance

to consider the contextual morality of cannibalism, should circumstances of extreme privation call for such a practice. Led by Adam One, the Gardeners, most of whom miraculously survive, hole up in their "Ararat," the cellar of the Buenavista Condo Complex, where they are forced to eat animal protein, even as they give thanks for the fact that "so many of our Rat relatives have donated their protein to us, thus enabling us to remain on this Earthly plane. . . . But these resources are exhausted, and we must either move or starve" (Atwood, *Year* 345) or become cannibals. Prior to the flood, the Gardeners grow their own food in their rooftop garden and advocate, via their interpretation of various passages of the Bible, respect for all life, animal, plant, and human. Members take the "Vegivows" when they join the Gardeners, even as many still crave meat and break those vows to consume it. The vegan stance that the Gardeners adopt—and support with biblical doctrine—is questioned after the apocalypse. Adam One's early assertion that "Adam's first act towards the animals was . . . one of loving-kindness and kinship, for man in his unfallen state was not yet a carnivore" (13) is replaced late in the narrative with Adam One's meditation on the "Alpha Predator aspects of God" (346).

Prior to looking at how the vegan/carnivore position shifts in the novel and how it, like *The Road*, is "principally concerned with the question of what role language, literature, and more generally, the human propensity for symbol-making can play in our attempts to deal with the ecological crisis" (Bergthaller 729) depicted in the novel, it is first necessary to situate *The Year of the Flood* in the context of its predecessor, *Oryx and Crake*. The two works examine the same set of circumstances—the role of marketing and greed in humanity's blind and mindless purchase and consumption of a drug that results in the downfall of the human race—from the perspectives of different players in the bioterrorist event that brings about the "waterless flood," coined by the God's Gardeners in *The Year of the Flood* with obvious reference to the biblical flood of Genesis, during which Noah saves two of all animal species. As Adam One says, "Let us remember Noah, the chosen caregiver of the species. We God's Gardeners are a plural Noah" (Atwood, *Year* 91). From the perspective of Snowman, Atwood's only male focalizer to date, *Oryx and Crake* tells the story of Jimmy (later Snowman), seeming sole human survivor; Crake (previously Glenn), Jimmy's best friend and engineer of the BlyssPluss pill; and Oryx, the enigmatic woman who is lover to both of them. The world in which these characters live is the near future, a familiar place filled with chemical alteration and genetic modification; animals such as "pigoons"—pigs who grow human organs for harvest—and ChickieNobs—an "animal protein tuber" (Atwood, *Oryx* 202)—are made in labs. Crake engineers a humanoid species, "the Crakers," that has been modified both to survive the extreme environmental conditions depicted in the near future of the novel and not to engage in any of the aggressive, competitive behaviors associated

with human beings. They are designed without "features like emotion, love, imagination or creativity" because "Crake believes that imagination is the main downfall of humanity, as it is our ability to imagine our own deaths that is responsible for overpopulation" (Glover 57). At first, Crake presents his creations to Jimmy as floor models ready to market as adoptable babies: "The vegans are highly interested" because the Crakers "ate nothing but leaves and grass and roots and a berry or two," and they even "recycled their own excrement" (305).

Atwood has stated that "global warming, over-irrigation, contaminated ground-water, and animal extinctions are the axioms upon which she built the novel" (Glover 54), and the narrative depicts a time after "the coastal aquifers turned salty and the northern permafrost melted and the vast tundra bubbled with methane, and the drought in the midcontinental plains regions went on and on, and the Asian steppes turned to sand dunes, and meat became harder to come by" (Atwood, *Oryx* 24). The novel begins at "zero hour," the "absence of official time" (3), as Snowman looks at his blank-faced watch. Here, as in *The Road*, the concept of "official time" is meaningless, as both works are situated in a time *after* "official" time has stopped—the clocks in McCarthy's work freeze at 1:17; Snowman's watch shows him "a blank face" (3). But unlike the sunless world of *The Road*, the world of *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood* is sweltering, white hot and polluted, a world in which Snowman, a former advertising executive, scavenges the remnants from a past time: an "authentic-replica Red Sox baseball cap," "a can of Svetlana No-Meat Cocktail Sausages, and precious half-bottle of Scotch . . . and a chocolate-flavored energy bar scrounged from a trailer park. . . . He can't bring himself to eat it yet: it might be the last one he'll ever find" (4). These items establish an important dichotomy between what is real and what is fake—and the impossibility of distinguishing between the two—that underscores the entire novel. Furthermore, the hat's status as an authentic replica is an indication that something can be both real and fake at the same time. The sausages are "No-Meat," and the energy bar is chocolate flavored, not "real" chocolate. Unlike the man in *The Road* who rages at the meaninglessness of past language, Snowman tries to hold on to words that make no sense in his present moment, snippets of signifiers for which the signified no longer exists: "Rag ends of language are floating in his head: *mephitic, mastitis, metatarsal, maudlin*" (148).

The question of what is real and what is not is of primary concern to Jimmy/Snowman, but Crake considers there to be no distinction between these two categories: of the genetically engineered butterflies that cover the campus at Watson Crick, Crake's university, Jimmy asks, "Are they recent?" and Crake answers, "In other words, are they real or fake?" He continues: "If you could tell they were fake . . . it was a bad job. These butterflies fly,

they mate, they lay eggs, caterpillars come out" (Atwood, *Oryx* 200). While "recent"/fake butterflies might be harmless enough, the issue is more ethically problematic with regard to the genetic manipulation of animals that humans typically eat. The pigoons, designed by scientists like Jimmy's father, who works at OrganInc Farms, grow human organs for harvesting; they are pigs with human cells, and "some of them may have human neocortex tissue growing in their . . . heads" (235). While the corporation claims that "none of the defunct pigoons ended up as bacon or sausages: no one would want to eat an animal whose cells might be identical with at least some of their own" (24), employees at OrganInc Farms notice a preponderance of pork on the menu of the company café. The prospect of cannibalism is linked in Atwood's novel, as it is in McCarthy's, with a mindless and unethical consumer culture, in this case, a culture concerned with—and dependent upon—the farming and harvesting of organs for sale to medical corporations and hospitals and the consumption of *real* meat.

Jimmy's earliest memory is of a bonfire of contaminated livestock, "an enormous pile of cows and sheep and pigs" (Atwood, *Oryx* 15–16). As a child, he worries about the suffering of the burning animals and is not assured when his father tells him that the animals were already dead prior to being burned. His father says that these animals are "like steaks and sausages, only they still had their skins on" (18). But Jimmy thinks, "Steaks didn't have heads. The heads made a difference: he thought he could see the animals looking at him reproachfully out of their burning eyes. In some way all of this—the bonfire, the charred smell, but most of all the lit-up, suffering animals—was his fault, because he'd done nothing to rescue them" (18). This encounter with the animal body, fully intact and in possession of "burning eyes," is a moment that restores the absent referent of the real animal in the discourse of "meat" (steaks, sausages, etc.) from which it has been removed.[5] In seeing the fully intact bodies of the animals, Jimmy claims responsibility not only for their deaths but also for their transition from animals to meat. In a novel where "hedonistic consumerism is the new religion" (Parry 244), the consumption of "real" meat becomes a kind of status symbol, and despite the fact that "global consumption of meat is expected to double by 2050, bringing to crisis the so-called carbon hoofprint alone of an industry that already accounts for 18 percent of global greenhouse-gas emissions" (McHugh 185), in the novel, the scarcity of real, nongenetically engineered meat drives up demand for it. Even as scientists engineer fake meat options, the desire to consume real meat functions as a kind of nostalgia, "more desirable than soy-based substitutes, and as somehow the incarnation of a golden era when life was better and more meaningful" (Parry 243). For the characters in *Oryx and Crake* who are increasingly distanced, via genetic engineering, from the "natural" world, the consumption of real meat feels like a link to nature, a way to

connect with a past time when the perceived lines between nature and culture were, at least theoretically, more clearly drawn and less easily transgressed.

In addition to the soy-based meat alternatives presented in the work, scientists at Watson Crick also engineer a creature called a ChickieNob, a kind of "animal-protein tuber" (Atwood, *Oryx* 202) that feels no pain and grows chicken parts. Jimmy is appalled when Crake shows him the creature: "'But there aren't any heads,' said Jimmy. . . . [T]his thing was going too far. At least the pigoons of his childhood hadn't lacked heads" (202). Jimmy considers the thing a "nightmare" (202) precisely because it lacks the things—a head and eyes—that make an animal an animal; the ChickieNobs evoke the inverse of the animals Jimmy sees burning early in his childhood, even as the creature has been created in direct response to the circumstances that require that those animals be slaughtered. In the ChickieNobs, "*Oryx and Crake* imagines the real artificial meat source as an utterly abject creature" (McHugh 192). The concept of "real artificial meat," as referenced by Susan McHugh in her article "Real Artificial: Tissue-Cultured Meat, Genetically Modified Farm Animals, and Fictions," posits the ways that the categories of "real" and "artificial" become complicated in a world where human beings are essentially able to create and alter life—both human and animal—in ways that blur ethical responsibility to both animals and humans. McHugh notes that whether or not fake meat might constitute a kind of environmental panacea remains to be seen and that PETA's support for such contemporary projects as New Harvest's engineered meat marks a "profound misunderstanding not only of how people and animals are presently involved in these processes, but also meat's liminal life among human and animal bodies" (187).[6] Likewise, what appears to be the ethically driven creation of "fake" animals and health-beneficial pharmaceuticals in *Oryx and Crake* is ultimately exposed as a project aimed at destroying "real" humans and animals: the bug that leads to the animal bonfire is introduced by competing interests, aimed at driving the price of animal flesh higher and requiring the creation of "fake" meat substitutes, just as Crake's BlyssPluss pill ostensibly prevents sexually transmitted disease but kills those who consume it.

Before looking at *The Year of the Flood*, it is worth noting, as Robert McKay does, that "animals are present in Margaret Atwood's early work, whatever the genre" (207), and in that early work, animals often function as symbols for the victimization of specific groups of people, Canadians in particular. In *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (1972), Atwood states that the central theme in Canadian literature is survival, and she locates in Canadian literature four "victim positions," ranging from denying that one is a victim, to acknowledging that one is a victim of something beyond one's control, to believing that one is a victim of something that one can change, to becoming

a creative nonvictim. These victim positions, according to Atwood, are universal, "whether you are a victimized country, a victimized minority group, or a victimized individual" (*Survival* 46). It is, therefore, not only through the trope of survival that Atwood reads Canadian literature and interprets Canadian national identity but also through the trope of victimization. Indeed, in order to survive, one must first be a victim of something else. In *Conversations*, Atwood says that the animal is the symbol for Canadian victimhood (81), and in *Surfacing*, her second novel, which was published the same year as *Survival*, the body of a mutilated heron is symbolically conflated with the body of the novel's unnamed female narrator and with the Québécois wilderness.

Because of this kind of treatment of animals in Atwood's work, McKay contends that her "assertion that animals are *always* symbols—that they can *only* bear anthropomorphic meaning such as providing the vehicle for cathartic explorations of Canada's national identity in victimization—has an important corollary. She makes it logically *impossible* to render the victimization of animals in literature" (219). While I take McKay's point, I am more inclined to see Atwood's depictions of violence against animals and violence done to humans as interconnected rather than as one standing for the other; as the narrator of *Surfacing* notes, "Anything we could do to the animals we could do to each other: we practiced on them first" (122). And animals function differently in *Oryx and Crake* than they do in Atwood's earlier work, occupying a kind of liminal space between real and fake that requires characters—particularly Jimmy—to engage with the politics of eating them. Still, as Jovian Parry observes, in the novel, "meat eating is an inescapable part of *true* human nature, and vegetarianism is for subhumans and cranks" (252). Furthermore, despite Atwood's "fondness for linking meat-aversion to issues of female disempowerment . . . she always wryly undermines any vegetarian message that might be read into her work" (253).

Indeed, within *Oryx and Crake*, even as a noncarnivorous diet would appear to be an aid against the environmental tolls of the meat industry, vegetarianism and veganism are treated as laughable positions occupied by fanatical nut jobs epitomized by Jimmy's college roommate, Bernice, a God's Gardener who "let him know how much she disapproved of his carnivorous ways by kidnapping his leather sandals and incinerating them on the lawn" (189). When Jimmy protests that the sandals were not *real* leather, Bernice "said they'd been posing as it, and as such deserved their fate" (189). This encounter, humorous as it is, again underscores the novel's primary concern with conceptions of real and fake and with how one determines the divide between those two categories: the "leather" is not "real" leather, but in its "posing" as the real thing, it becomes suspect. Even though he struggles with his feelings with regard to the bonfire, Jimmy remains an omnivore prior to the apocalypse, and after the virus destroys humanity, Snowman subsists on the fake

foods that remain from the time before. The Crakers prepare a fish for him once a week, even as they find the practice of killing the fish unpleasant, but Snowman remains the lone omnivore in the novel: he "can't live on clover. The people would never eat the fish themselves, but they have to bring him one a week because he's told them Crake has decreed it" (101). In the presence of the Crakers, Snowman, ostensibly the last human being, becomes an unfamiliar creature with "beastly appetites" (101), the abominable snowman, "apelike man or manlike ape" (8), a creature that exists between the poles of animal and human. If to be human is to be carnivorous, as the novel seems to suggest, then to be posthuman—to be a Craker, a creature equipped to thrive in the postapocalyptic world—is to be vegan.

The Year of the Flood supports this assertion. Like its predecessor *Oryx and Crake*, *The Year of the Flood* is satirically speculative; in its treatment of the end of the world, it is the polar opposite of the bleak apocalyptic probability depicted in *The Road* in that even as it engages with the world after a catastrophic event, it is disturbingly funny in its overt ridicule of the cultural realities that bring about the waterless flood. Despite her noncommittal stance with regard to animal rights and vegetarianism/veganism in her work, Atwood has long been an outspoken environmental advocate, and when she won the Booker Prize for *The Blind Assassin* (2000), she donated all of the prize money to the World Wildlife Foundation, the Sierra Club, the David Suzuki Foundation, and the Long Point Bird Observatory (Gould). When asked if she was vegetarian in 2001, she answered, "I don't eat a lot of animal fat, because I have a cholesterol problem, alas. So I had to cut down" (Gould). But in a 2009 interview, when Hephzibah Anderson asked if she had become vegetarian for her book tour for *The Year of the Flood*, Atwood answered, "Yes, I've themed myself, though I shouldn't use the term vegetarian because I'm allowing myself gastropods, crustaceans and the occasional fish. Nothing with fur or feathers, though." The shift may have been as much a part of the showmanship of the tour, an event that was more performance art than traditional book tour (the carbon neutral readings consisted of choral productions of God's Gardeners hymns, and proceeds went to such organizations as Nature Canada and Farm Forward [see Alter]), but Atwood's position, ironic or not, brings to the fore the complicated and often contradictory position of the God's Gardeners, a group viewed by those not within its ranks as "twisted fanatics who combine food extremism with bad fashion sense and a puritanical attitude toward shopping" (*Year* 48). These extremist positions, however, are exactly what enable the Gardeners to survive the waterless flood.

Within the context of the novel, "mallways" market "tawdry rubbish" (Atwood, *Year* 71) made by "synthetic slave labor evil" (141) to the masses, and these are places forbidden to the Gardeners. The mallway is the source of entertainment and consumption for the "pleebrats" who populate the Exfer-

nal World at large; Ren comments about how pleeb girls dress in "miniskirts and spangled tops, candyfloss boas around their necks, silver gloves, plasticized butterflies clipped into their hair. They had their Sea/H/Ear Candies and their burning-bright phones and their jellyfish bracelets" (72), while she and the other Gardeners "were so flat, so plain, so scrubbed, so dark. . . . [She] wanted their gaudy freedom" (66). Such freedom, however, is marked by enslavement to consumer culture and, further, by dependence upon the various mind-altering substances available in the pleeblands. Again, the Gardeners are forbidden from consuming such items. Ren's mother, Lucerne, leaves Ren's father and their life in the gated communityesque world of the HelthWyzer Compound to live with Zeb, an unlikely Gardener who mocks the Gardeners' puritanical ways, but Lucerne, realizing that Zeb never really loved her, eventually takes Ren back to the Compound. Ren later becomes an exotic dancer / sex worker at Scales and Tails, a club in the Exfernal World where parolees from Painball—an arena reminiscent of Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* where convicted hardened criminals are "allowed" to fight to the death on live television—stalk dancers. The criminals often inflict various forms of sexual harm upon the dancers, damage that requires them to spend time in the Sticky Zone, a quarantined air lock from within which Ren survives the flood. As she says, "I got a rip in my Biofilm Bodyglove—a client got carried away and bit me, right through the green sequins—and I was waiting for my test results" (7). In its opening section, the novel references what is perhaps a tongue-in-cheek linkage between sex and cannibalism, and, later, it extends that linkage to include zombification as well.

Mordis, a sort of manager figure at Scales and Tails, looks out for the girls by plying the Painballers with booze and BlyssPluss: "He'd steer this one into the feather-ceiling rooms, dump in some alcohol, stick some girls on top of him, and he'd be what Mordis called one blitzed-out brain-dead squeeze-dried happy zombie. And now that we had BlyssPluss, he'd get multiple orgasms and wuzzy comfy feelings, with no microbe death downside. The furniture breakage at Scales had tanked since they'd been using that stuff" (Atwood, *Year* 202). The girls are not allowed to take the drug, which, in addition to being locked in the Sticky Zone, is why Ren survives the end of the world. BlyssPluss—engineered by Crake to wipe out all of humanity—turns people into zombies in two ways. First, it reduces humans to beings driven solely by a desire for sex, and second, after the virus in the pill becomes active, it turns the infected into the walking dead. Later in the novel, Ren describes the dying: "Some of them were in the last stages, walking around like zombies" (322). Desire for the drug, consumed wantonly and without thought by the masses, drives humanity to fall for the marketing scam that leads to its downfall; the drug promises safe sex, protection from sexually transmitted disease, and birth control, a combination with great appeal both

to the disenfranchised masses living in the Exfernal World of the pleeblands and to those overworked corporate drudges who live within the Compounds. While we learn in *Oryx and Crake* that Crake, unbeknownst to his friend, has inoculated Jimmy/Snowman against the virus, thus ensuring his survival after the plague, a life of privation on the part of the God's Gardeners is what spares them the fate of the rest of humanity.

Toby joins the Gardeners when they show up carrying signs that read "Don't Eat Death! Animals R Us!" and chant "*No meat! No meat!*" (Atwood, *Year* 39) to rescue her from her job at SecretBurgers, where her boss, Blanco, has been consistently raping and torturing her. The burgers are "secret" because one can never be sure what is in them, whether animal or human or other. The narrator says that one year "the CorpSeCorps had closed them down after one of their high-placed officials went slumming in the Sewage Lagoon and his shoes were discovered on the feet of a SecretBurgers meat-grinder operator" (34). Blanco is later sent to Painball for murder, although he then escapes and pursues Toby, even after the end of the world.

The narrative opens in Year Twenty-Five, the Year of the Flood, with Toby climbing to the roof of her stronghold in what is left of AnooYoo Spa, where she once worked, a place quite unlike the former rooftop Edencliff Garden of the God's Gardeners. She looks out at the "derelict city," and "the air smells faintly of burning. . . . The abandoned towers in the distance are like the coral of an ancient reef—bleached and colorless, devoid of life," but, unlike the world depicted in *The Road*, "there is still life. . . . Birds chirp; sparrows they must be. Their small voices are clear and sharp, nails on glass: there's no longer any sound to drown them out" (Atwood, *Year* 3). The narrative switches back and forth, between Ren's first-person narration and the third-person narrative voice that details Toby's exploits and interiority, as well as between the time before the flood and the time after it.

Just as *Oryx and Crake* draws consistent attention to the "real" and "fake" nature of genetically modified creatures, *The Year of the Flood* is equally concerned with "real" and "fake" beliefs with regard to religion, ethics, and consumption, and the narrative explicitly engages with characters' tendencies to blur those distinctions—to cross various lines with regard to the solidity of their faith. For Toby, being a member of the God's Gardeners never feels authentic; throughout the novel, we are told that "she wasn't really a convert" (Atwood, *Year* 45), that she sees the Gardeners as "fugitives from reality" (47), that she is aware that she is a "sham" (113). Despite her feelings with regard to the legitimacy of her position—to being a "fake" Gardener—she still adheres to the Gardeners' dictates, even if they seem ridiculous to her. Even after the flood, when she is starving, she refuses to eat meat. Early in the novel, the narrator says that Toby had "taken the Vegivows when she joined the Gardeners, but the prospect of a bacon sandwich [made from meat from

a pigoon she kills in order to protect her garden] is a great temptation right now." "She resists it. . . . [A]nimal protein should be the last resort" (19). Despite their strict adherence to a vegan diet, the Gardeners are also realists, aware that their veganism is contextual, entirely dependent upon their ability to grow their own food. For this reason, Zeb leads the Gardener children in a Predator-Prey demonstration during which they learn about trapping and killing animals in case "worst comes to worst" (140), and the children are required to eat animal flesh. Ren chokes down a rabbit that Zeb kills during the demonstration, pretending that it is "bean paste," but she nonetheless "felt like [she had] eaten a nosebleed" (140). Even after she leaves the Gardeners and returns to the posh comfort of the Compound, Ren, like Toby, holds on to her Gardener ways, despite her claim that, unlike her childhood friend Bernice—who is also Jimmy's vegan roommate from *Oryx and Crake*—she has neither "convictions" nor "courage" (290).

On the one hand, *The Year of the Flood* is about the role of faith in survival, but it is also about how one justifies crossing or refusing to cross the various lines designated by one's supposed belief system in order to survive in a world where that belief system breaks down. For example, the narrator says that the Painballers often cannibalize their fellow Painballers "if food was running low or just to show how mean you were. After a while, thought Toby, you wouldn't just cross the line, you'd forget there ever were any lines" (Atwood, *Year* 99), and the vegan stance espoused by the Gardeners prior to the flood is similarly breached afterward when Adam One asks his disciples, "Which is more blessed, to eat or to be eaten? To flee or to chase? To give or to receive? For these are at heart the same questions" (347). *The Year of the Flood*, like Atwood's earlier work of speculative fiction, *The Handmaid's Tale*, raises questions about the nature of faith and the way that human beings shape dogma to fit specific circumstances and needs.[7] It also addresses the nature of supposed hypocrisy, apparent in the way that, particularly within the context of religion, human beings often hold one position in public and another in private; as Ren notes, "Adam One used to say that people can believe two things at the same time" (229), and this ability to hold two realities as equally viable is at the heart of the narrative's struggle with belief and ethics, particularly with regard to what one consumes before and after the end of the world. Hannes Bergthaller notes that for the God's Gardeners, "it is not enough simply to survive—what is needed is a symbolic order within which the fact of survival can appear as meaningful and good" (738). The Gardeners' theology "grafts views familiar from Deep Ecology (most importantly, the evolutionary kinship of all species and the ethical obligations it entails) onto an essentially Christian religious framework" (739). The resultant doctrine is, as Bergthaller claims "patently silly" (739), but despite the light hand that Atwood takes in rendering the Gardeners and their beliefs—their saints named after the likes of Diane Fosse

and Euell Gibbons and their horrible hymns—the Gardeners (by the end of the narrative, mostly vegan and largely technologically puritanical), perhaps because of their ability to hold various realities as equally probable, survive the flood, while the rest of humanity perishes.

If the Gardeners' stance (that their veganism might at some point give way to something as extreme as cannibalism; that it is possible to believe two things at once) seems hypocritical within the context of a religion that requires respect for all creatures, the novel is careful to engage with that hypocrisy in a way that can perhaps foster a new mythology upon which to rebuild society after the apocalypse. Adam One tells Toby, when she expresses doubt that she should be an Eve because she does not truly believe in the Gardeners' doctrine, "In some religions, faith precedes action. . . . In ours, action precedes faith. You've been acting as if you believe, dear Toby. *As if*—those two words are very important to us. Continue to live according to them, and belief will flow in time. . . . We should not expect too much from faith" (Atwood, *Year* 168).

In the context of such sentiment, to act "as if," to pretend, essentially to *fake* it, is what is required if one is to survive the end of the world and then to tell the story of that survival. The fake becomes the real: in acting "as if," one becomes that which one performs. At the end of the novel, after Toby has rescued Ren and her friend Amanda from three Painballers (one of whom is Blanco), Jimmy/Snowman appears, feverish, nearly dead, his foot infected; this is where we have left him at the end of *Oryx and Crake*, about to encounter a group of people, whether enemy or friend, he does not know. Toby delivers a kind of prayer "to remember those who are gone . . . dear Adams, dear Eves, dear Fellow Mammals and Fellow Creatures, all those now in Spirit—keep us in your view and lend us your strength" (Atwood, *Year* 432). Whether her beliefs are real or fake is unimportant; they are the pieces of the story that are left—indeed they are the beliefs that have survived—in the new world that will arise from the ashes of the old. The survivors listen to music, "the sound of many people singing" (431), and watch the singers, the Crakers, moving toward them through the trees. The mythology that will come next will not be the mythology of Snowman, the dying animal in their midst; it will be the mythology of the Gardeners, a narrative of survival and hope and, most importantly, of respect for all living creatures.

At the end of the world in both novels, one is either vegan or cannibal, and both works are about the nature of faith and the negotiation of belief in a changed world where the context for previous systems of belief has disappeared. In their treatment of the politics of the food of the previous world, these shifting belief systems are prescient in the way that they ask us to consider how our future might look if our current patterns of consumption remain unchecked in times of environmental devastation and unchecked

population growth. The Gardeners' doctrine has been forged in anticipation of the Waterless Flood, the apocalyptic event that alters life on planet earth; the veganism it requires may seem silly prior to the flood, but it is veganism, along with an eschewing of an exploitative consumer culture and survivalist training, that keeps the Gardeners from zombification. In the wake of the flood, this belief system will likewise allow the Gardeners to survive while others succumb to disease, madness, and death in the absence of social and institutional structures that enabled survival in the previous incarnation of the world. In *The Road*, the choice not to be a cannibal keeps the man and boy from zombification in the final days as the planet ceases to support any life, with the exception of the morel mushrooms that the two find early in the novel. But unlike *The Year of the Flood*, in the current moment of *The Road*, veganism—like cannibalism—does not constitute a sustainable mode of survival, at least not in the present moment of the narrative. Despite the fact that all life on planet Earth appears to be on its last legs, however, the continued—and seemingly miraculous—survival of the boy, a character born after the apocalyptic event that shapes the events in the novel and therefore uninfluenced by the consumer, capitalist culture that came before, maintains a nonexploitative, empathetic morality that will necessarily shape whatever follows.

CHAPTER 4

Death by Veganism, Veganorexia, and Vegaphobia

Women, Choice, and the Politics of "Disordered" Eating

Death by Veganism

The preceding two chapters examined two sets of fictional vegans: vampires, perfect, unalterable, unaging, and nearly indestructible, and postapocalyptic survivors, endangered, zombified, starving, and succumbing. This chapter and the one that follows it look at real vegans and representations of veganism and vegan bodies, both male and female, as they are constituted via a contemporary post-9/11 media discourse of veganism and vegan identity. This chapter examines the media's linkage of several cases of infant mortality to the supposed vegan status of the children's parents—particularly their mothers—and it also examines various studies that situate women's adoption of vegetarian and vegan diets as linked to anorexia.

In the media's linkage of veganism to infant mortality, much of the criticism has focused on the role that the supposed nutritional inadequacy of the mothers' breast milk plays in these cases, and studies that link plant-based diets with female disordered consumption further a discourse of dietary irresponsibility that insists that women's nonnormative dietary choices must be monitored. In both cases, control of women's bodies with regard to what they eat is of primary concern. Such discourse is part and parcel of other external attempts to control female bodies, particularly when it comes to their status or potential status as maternal bodies, and about questions of "legitimacy" (as that term was used by Missouri congressman Todd Akin to describe rape in August 2012), in this case, in terms of diet.

In a CNN editorial titled "Kate's Breasts, Pussy Riot, Virginity Tests, and Our Attitude on Women's Bodies," Naomi Wolf notes the potential cultural crossroads at which we currently find ourselves with regard to our attitudes about women's bodies and sexuality. For this reason, her essay is worth quoting at some length:

> In a hypersexualized culture, in which porn is available 24-7, it is not female nudity—or discussion about vaginas or breasts or "pussy riots"—that is scandalous. . . .

> Rather, what is still scandalous to our culture is when women take ownership of their own bodies. Staging a strip performance is not disruptive to social order in Moscow, but three punk poets using their sexuality to make a satirical comment about Russian leader Vladimir Putin is destabilizing and must be punished.
>
> Legislating the most intimate aspects of women's reproductive lives, all the way to imposing transvaginal probes on them—as states are doing across the country—isn't shocking or obscene, because it is about taking away sexual control from women of their own bodies. . . . The issue is not the vagina, but who gets to say what becomes of it and who owns it.

Whereas the previous two chapters of this study examined the ways that veganism is manifest in popular and literary culture, in this chapter, I examine the way that, within much of the current cultural discourse, vegetarianism—and veganism as rendered within that discourse as the most "restrictive" example of vegetarianism—factors into this larger extant debate about control and ownership of real women's bodies and the way that, with regard to women, nonnormative diets are rendered as inherently disordered forms of consumption that must be kept in check, as they are responsible not only for women's self-starvation via anorexia but also for the murder of innocent children at the hands of their uninformed (at best) or sadistic (at worst) vegan mothers. In the context of many of the texts examined here, the reasons the women in question choose vegetarian or vegan diets are disregarded outright, and veganism is merely treated as a more extreme form of "restrictive" vegetarianism. This oversight or conflation, depending on the case, functions to reduce the nature of female vegan identity to a position solely concerned with privation and largely silences a counter antispeciesist discourse that underscores much of vegan identity politics. The twenty-first-century attention to female vegans' diets as dysfunctional and dangerous stems, in part, from what Susan Faludi calls a "fevered dream our country seemed to fall into after 9/11," during which "we turned away from the real stories and reinforced those old stereotypes. That mythology has a gender drama at the center of it, a very particular American mythology: the damsel in distress and a brave and capable man come to rescue her" (qtd. in Kingsbury). That mythology has played out in terms of how women's nonstandard dietary choices endanger women, their children, and the nation, and veganism as portrayed by the mainstream media took on a decidedly negative tone.

Consider the nature of the media discourse about veganism more closely: Matthew Cole and Karen Morgan, in their 2011 study "Vegaphobia: Derogatory Discourses of Veganism and the Reproduction of Speciesism in U.K. National Newspapers," used the LexisNexis database to search the terms "vegan," "vegans," and "veganism" in all U.K. newspapers for the 2007 cal-

endar year in order to analyze the Foucauldian concept of discourse—whether positive, neutral, or negative—with regard to the topic of veganism.[1] Of the 397 articles they examined, only 22 (5.5 percent) were positive; 80 (20.2 percent) were neutral, and 295 (a whopping 74.3 percent) were negative (138). Of the articles that treated veganism negatively, the authors characterize the negative rhetoric by placing it in one of six categories. These are, in order of frequency of occurrence, ridiculing veganism, characterizing veganism as asceticism, describing veganism as difficult or impossible to sustain, describing veganism as a fad, characterizing vegans as oversensitive, and characterizing vegans as hostile (139). According to Cole and Morgan, "empirical sociological studies of vegans are rare. . . . When they are present as research participants, they are usually treated as a subset of vegetarians and their veganism tends to be viewed as a form of dietary asceticism involving exceptional efforts of self-transformation" (135). What such studies tend to overlook, therefore, is the importance of animal rights for many vegans, an area of research that remains largely unexplored. If it is, according to Cole and Morgan, "plausible to assert that on the basis of existing evidence, veganism is understood by most vegans . . . as an aspect of anti-speciesist practice" (135), then cultural discourse that conflates veganism and vegetarianism (on the one hand) or that views veganism as simply a more severe form of vegetarian dietary limitation (on the other) disregards a primary motivation for many vegans—animal rights and animal welfare—as it focuses instead on a rhetoric of dietary restriction, denial, and privation.

Perhaps nowhere can the linkage between discussions of veganism and issues of privation be seen as clearly as in "Death by Veganism," Nina Planck's 2007 *New York Times* editorial, which discusses Crown Shakur, who died at six weeks of age after "his vegan parents . . . fed him mainly soy milk and apple juice." As a result of their son's death, the parents were convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison. Planck, who, according to the article, was once a vegan herself, is the author of *Real Food: What to Eat and Why*; her web page claims Planck is an advocate of "traditional foods. She will liberate you to eat red meat, butter, raw milk, and lard." For Planck, a "vegan pregnancy was irresponsible," and she asserts that in her study of indigenous cultures, "there are no vegan societies for a simple reason: a vegan diet is not adequate in the long term" ("Death"). In her outrage at parents who would deny their child animal-based food, she makes inaccurate claims, particularly that vitamin B12 is "found only in animal foods," and equates veganism with faddism, noting that "food is more important than fashion."[2]

The idea that the baby died of a vegan diet exploded in the mainstream press, but what seems more likely is that veganism was used in this case as the excuse for an instance of extreme neglect. Margaret Hartmann notes that "experts say that veganism isn't what killed him" and that the boy died, as

prosecutors demonstrated, not because he was fed a vegan diet but because he was not fed at all. According to Hartmann, "highlighting the couple's dietary preferences unfairly suggests that all vegan parents may be putting their families in danger."

In addition to the case of Crown Shakur and the outrage against veganism that it sparked, since 2001 worldwide there have been at least four other cases of infant mortality that have been depicted in the news media as having resulted, in some form or other, from veganism: in addition to one other case in the United States in 2005, there was a 2008 case in France, a 2001 case in the U.K., and a 2002 case in New Zealand ("Vegan Parents on Trial"). The news stories all focus on the vegan status of the parents—and in at least two cases, on the inadequate nature of the breast milk of the negligent vegan mothers—as well as on the diets that they fed their children prior to death. A March 30, 2011, headline in the *Mail Online* reads: "French Vegan Couple Whose Baby Died of Vitamin Deficiency after Being Fed Solely on Breast Milk Face Jail for Child Neglect." The couple, Sergine and Joel Le Moaligou, are described as "militant vegans" in the article. In an article about the case in New Zealand, the author notes: "Roby and Deborah Moorhead are vegans. . . . Mrs. Moorhead's breast milk was deficient in B12 and inadequate for [her son] Caleb's nutritional needs." In addition to their radical diet, the Moorheads are also characterized as "radical Christians." In the case of baby Caleb, a *New Zealand Herald* article blames Deborah Moorhead not only for her veganism and for starving her child by feeding him her inadequate breast milk but also for stealing Jan Moorhead away from his former wife, who fed him meat. Jan, formerly "a successful, hardworking man with a big house and a swimming pool," like "many Kiwi blokes . . . lived on a diet at dinner time of meat and three vegetables." After leaving his first wife and moving in with Deborah, however, "he became a deeply religious vegan." But veganism, again, is not what killed Caleb: instead, his death is directly attributable to his parents' refusal to allow him adequate medical care after they were made aware by medical professionals that his circumstances were life threatening. And just as religion is used as an excuse for veganism in this case, supposed extreme religious beliefs are likewise linked to veganism and the 2005 death of Woyah Andressohn of Miami: "It has also been reported the family's diet may have been connected to their religion, known as 'Hebrew Israelite' which promotes raw food and natural eating" ("Parents Accused").

To critique the presentation of these cases is in no way meant to undermine or downplay the seriousness of the circumstances that led to the death of these children. It is, however, an attempt to look at these cases in a broader context and to examine the sensationalizing rhetoric that depicts veganism as a menacing danger inflicted by negligent, uninformed parents—primarily mothers—on their children. For some perspective: according to the Centers

for Disease Control's infant mortality statistics for 2008, "the U.S. infant mortality rate was 6.61 infant deaths per 1,000 live births." Further,

> the leading cause of infant death in the United States in 2008 was congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities . . . accounting for 20 percent of all infant deaths. Disorders relating to short gestation and low birth weight, not elsewhere classified (low birth weight) was second, accounting for 17 percent of all infant deaths, followed by sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) accounting for eight percent of infant deaths. The fourth and fifth leading causes in 2008 were newborn affected by maternal complications of pregnancy (maternal complications) (six percent), and accidents (unintentional injuries) (five percent). Together the five leading causes accounted for 57 percent of all infant deaths in the U.S. in 2008.

According to statistics compiled in 2011 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "nationally estimated 1,560 children died from abuse and neglect in 2010. This translates to a rate of 2.07 children per 100,000 children in the general population and an average of four children dying every day from abuse or neglect" ("Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities"). According to the World Health Organization, worldwide, "every year, there are an estimated 31,000 homicide deaths in children under 15." Finally, "this number underestimates the true extent of the problem, as a significant proportion of deaths due to child maltreatment are incorrectly attributed to falls, burns, drowning and other causes" ("Child Maltreatment"). If we take the 31,000 figure as the yearly average of worldwide child deaths attributable to abuse, neglect, and murder, then the singular "death-by-veganism" incidents that occurred in 2002, 2005, and 2008 constitute .0032 percent of that number for those years; in 2001, when supposed "death by veganism" spiked to a whopping two instances, the percentage is .0065.

Regardless of these statistics, however, these cases and the media's focus on the supposed vegan diet fed to these children by their parents generated overwhelming condemnation of the parents in these cases and of veganism in general as an unnatural and unhealthy lifestyle, and it generated an abundance of articles condemning vegan mothers for breast feeding.[3] An article in the *Healthy Home Economist*, for example, admonishes readers, "abstinence from all animal foods is dangerous to one's health and most particularly, your baby!" (Pope). While veganism per se is not responsible for the death of these children, it is not my intention to prove or disprove that claim, nor do I want to expound on the extant data in support of a vegan diet as more health supportive than an omnivorous diet. My sense is that these cases are tragic and were likely caused by an unwillingness on the part of the parents to seek medical care for their children—and such unwillingness resulted from some

combination of neglect and misinformation. My sense is that these children suffered horribly, and my sense is that the parents who lost their children have suffered horribly as well. But what seems significant with regard to these particular cases is the focus on the supposed vegan diets of the parents as antiestablishment "militants" and "radicals" (and, at least in some cases, the link between radical diet and radical religious beliefs); the role that that diet played in the way that these cases were investigated, reported, and punished; and the way that in two of the cases, the content of the mother's breast milk was of central importance. Given the statistics above, and given the minuscule number of vegans in the global population at large, children of carnivorous and omnivorous parents die of malnutrition and neglect far more often than children of vegan parents, but the diet of the parents almost never makes headlines, unless that diet deviates from what is considered the standard.[4]

An interactive timeline in the *New York Times* traces the de-evolution of the Standard American Diet, noting that "the Standard American Diet, also referred to as the Western pattern diet, looked a lot different a few hundred years ago. People mostly consumed fruits, vegetables, wild grains and seeds, fish and occasionally meat. Today many Americans gorge on sugars, refined flour and processed food." The timeline traces the progression of the American diet from the advent of refined sucrose in 1815, to the scientific fattening of cattle between 1850 and 1885, to the creation of the Department of Agriculture in 1862, to the expansion of the school lunch program in 1943, to the creation of fructose enrichment technology in the mid-1970s and beyond. By 2011, as the cumulative result of these events, one-third of all U.S. adults and 17 percent of all U.S. children between the ages of two and nineteen were obese ("Timeline"). The Standard American Diet is heavy on animal fat and low on fresh vegetables, and according to Mark Bittman's accompanying editorial, "heart disease, diabetes and cancer are all in large part caused by the Standard American Diet. (Yes, it's SAD.)" Bittman argues that even though experts consistently recommend "a diet high in plants and low in animal products and processed foods, ours is quite the opposite" and that "a sane diet could save tens if not hundreds of billions of dollars in health care costs." But the Standard American Diet persists, in large part because of the way that junk foods are marketed, resulting in a situation where "the average American consumes 44.7 gallons of soft drinks annually" and "one-third of all Americans either have diabetes or are pre-diabetic, most with Type two diabetes, the kind associated with bad eating habits" (Bittman, "Bad Food?").

Of the French death-by-veganism case, Mike Adams on NaturalNews.com chastises the "vegan police" for adhering to the mentality that supports such eating practices, claiming that "if the ambulance had shown up and found a dead baby in a family whose cupboards were stuffed full of junk food and

fast food . . . that would not have seemed suspicious at all." Adams's position, while extreme (he goes so far as to tell parents to lie about their veganism in order to protect their children), it is the product of a post-9/11 rhetoric and perhaps legitimate paranoia about the state's potential intervention with regard to nonnormative (and, therefore, suspicious) behavior—as I discussed in the first chapter of this study. And it also highlights the way that veganism is treated as both antithetical to the Standard American Diet and as anathema to appropriate parenting, specifically appropriate mothering: "Be prepared to fight the State for your right to raise your baby on breast milk. The State . . . believes you're supposed to be feeding your baby processed 'junk' infant formula made by powerful corporations. That infant formula, of course, contains . . . soy proteins extracted with the toxic solvent *hexane*. Even the DHA in many infant formula products is essentially 'synthetic'" (M. Adams). In a cultural moment in the United States marked by a childhood obesity epidemic, the product of a high-calorie and high-fat diet combined with limited exercise, there has been only one case where a parent has been charged with neglect for the morbid obesity of her child. In 2009 Jerri Althea Gray was charged with neglecting her fourteen-year-old son, a child who, at that time, weighed 555 pounds. Sherri F. Colb, who views the child's removal and the mother's arrest as wrong, writes that these actions nonetheless "raise an important question . . . : Might it be child neglect simply to feed our children the Standard American Diet?" It is a significant question—and one to ponder—when the Standard American Diet consists of 35 percent fat.

In the political moment that preceded the 2012 presidential election, we found ourselves in the midst of a media frenzy with regard to the Republican Party's so-called war on women, a platform characterized by legislation aimed at limiting women's access to both birth control and abortion and fueled by rhetoric that seeks to establish such entities as "legitimate" and "forcible" rape, in effect, to subdivide rape into real and false categories.[5] Simultaneously, we are experiencing a proliferation of popular cultural narratives that champion women's ability to be bawdy and funny, to be sexual, and to be in control of their sexuality.[6] Given where we are, perhaps it is time to consider how much of our cultural discourse represents veganism as a form of extreme and dangerous dietary control—and as an *illegitimate* choice that runs counter to the Standard American Diet—and how such representation factors into this broader political and social discussion.

Mary Elizabeth Williams's *Salon.com* article "A *Bones* Star's Controversial Vegan Pregnancy" offers a more nuanced examination of what it means for women to choose vegan pregnancies and to raise their children vegan, even as it notes the ways that women's dietary choices become fodder for continual public debate: "A woman's body—and what she puts into it—are generally regarded as fair game for public speculation. Throw in a fetus and

it's open season." The article examines three celebrity vegan women, Emily Deschanel, Alicia Silverstone, and Natalie Portman, all of whom have spoken publicly—whether by choice or because they felt called to defend their dietary positions—about the how, what, and why of their diets during pregnancy and what they planned to feed their babies thereafter. Deschanel was outspoken in her commitment to her veganism, noting the resolve that is necessary whenever she is confronted by someone telling her that she is making the wrong choice for her child. Alicia Silverstone, author of *The Kind Diet*, blogged about her vegan pregnancy and provided information about how to ensure a healthy vegan pregnancy and healthy vegan baby. Natalie Portman, who famously said in a 2009 *Huffington Post* editorial that "Jonathan Safran Foer's book *Eating Animals* changed me from a twenty-year vegetarian to a vegan activist," on the other hand, relinquished her veganism during her pregnancy. These three positions—Deschanel's assertion of her right to a vegan pregnancy, Silverstone's attempts to educate others about the realities of a vegan pregnancy, and Portman's assertion of her right *not* to be vegan and pregnant if doing so meant not listening to her body—underscore a larger debate about choice and control of women's decisions with regard to diet and motherhood. As Williams notes, "Though not everyone's needs or values are the same, as long as people keep conceiving, there will be plenty of onlookers around to debate a woman's right to choose—or eschew—cheese."

Veganorexia

According to historian Joan Jacobs Brumberg's *Fasting Girls: The History of Anorexia Nervosa*, "historical, anthropological, and psychological studies suggest that women use appetite as a form of expression more often than men, a tendency confirmed by scholars as well as clinicians" (5). Her work traces the prevalence of so-called disordered eating in women, from the phenomenon of anorexia mirabilis, which took place in medieval Europe between 1200 and 1500 and during which "many women refused their food and prolonged fasting was considered a female miracle" (*Fasting* 43), to our present-day understanding of the concept of anorexia nervosa as pathologically disordered. During the last three decades of the nineteenth century, women who became known as "fasting girls" made claims of supernatural powers, and, like their medieval predecessors, these women found a manner of fame, receiving the attention of the news media. In fact, Mollie Fancher, a young woman who supposedly loved her books, not God, more than food—a claim that marked the secularization of the prior phenomenon of anorexia mirabilis—was unsuccessfully recruited by P. T. Barnum to work as a professional hunger artist or clairvoyant (82). Despite the seeming connections between these two phases of restricted consumption, however, Brumberg is careful to note

that "we should avoid easy generalizations about the existence in past times of the modern disease entity anorexia nervosa or about 'women's nature,'" because "even as basic a human instinct as appetite is transformed by cultural and social systems and given new meaning in different historical epochs" (5). What is divinely inspired at one point is disordered at another. But what is obvious, both in Brumberg's study and elsewhere, is that the concept of ascetic eating—even to the point of starvation—particularly among young women, has a long and complicated history.

As Arthur Crisp notes, "Researchers have found case material in the historical literature suggestive of anorexia nervosa over many centuries," and throughout the last "millennia, sustained asceticism, with fasting and starvation at its heart, is reported as vastly more common in females than males" (147). Furthermore, anorexic women often "are perceived (want to be perceived, and perceive themselves) as something other than what they are . . . : as special, superhuman, or even sub-human, animal-like beings" (Medeiros 13). But while thinness, asceticism, and seeming self-control have historically received public admiration, starvation, thinness past an almost always undefined but nonetheless unacceptable point, causes disgust from and rejection by once-admiring spectators. Such a phenomenon is explicit in the transformation of female fasting from a form of piety and discipline to its status as pathological—as disease—as a result of "parallel processes of secularization and medicalization" (Brumberg, *Fasting* 99) that took place in the mid-nineteenth century. Kim Chernin makes a clear "association between eating and the struggle for identity" (xvii) for women, and Brumberg characterizes "food refusal and control of appetite as an indicator of *mentalities* in transition" (*Fasting* 99). For Chernin, eating disorders serve as dysfunctional rites of passage for women in a society that does not allow for legitimate and transformative female rites of passage. If this is the case, the eating disorder is in some sense a misguided feminist attempt to form and then assert a fully realized female subjectivity into a space that does not adequately offer women roles that are distinct from or not determined by patriarchy.

Traditionally, rites of passage allow for the uninitiated participant to separate from and then reintegrate with his or her community. Eating disorders, however, do not allow for reconnection with a clearly defined community that would then lead to the next stage of development, in large part because within Western culture, there are no visible, dominant female communities that are not inherently linked to and dependent upon male communities; women's culture is, in effect, men's culture.[7] As a result, the "disordered" individual is stuck in time; according to Chernin, "much of the obsessive quality of an eating disorder arises precisely from the fact that food is being asked to serve a transformative function that it cannot carry by itself" (167). In the current moment, as has been the case throughout history, anorexia nervosa (as well as

bulimia nervosa) occupies a fraught social position as a problematic and ineffectual rite of passage, as a plethora of "pro ana" websites—known for their valorization and idealization of the anorexic female body—attracts young, predominantly white, middle-class, female followers (as Brumberg notes, "The anorexic population has a highly specific social address" [*Starving* 16]) who seek a shared community, even as women still routinely starve to death from anorexia, which has the "highest mortality rate of any mental illness" (Fisak et al. 195).[8] Despite the fact that anorexia nervosa had been "known to physicians as early as the 1870s," the American press did not start writing about anorexia until the 1980s (Brumberg, *Starving* 11), and since that time, an increasing body of research has explored the links between vegetarian and vegan diets and "disordered" eating, noting the possible connections that exist between women's refusal to eat meat and other animal foods and anorexia nervosa.

In their 1986 study, which was published in the *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, Rao Kadambari, Simon Gowers, and Arthur Crisp note that "vegetarianism can be one facet of the ascetic stance[,] and . . . the ascetics' goals, of purification, placation, and acceptance also underlie the anorectics' behavior" (539–40). The authors studied 179 female and 21 male patients with anorexia, 77 of whom identified as vegetarian; of these, the authors considered 29 of these patients "usual" and 48 "severe" vegetarians (541). According to the authors, "it can be seen that vegetarian anorectics were more likely to be *abstainers*, *vegans*" (541, emphasis in original). The authors conclude: "It can be said that vegetarianism within anorexia nervosa is probably associated with overall dietary restraint within the illness, with mothers who are themselves concerned about their weight, and with a family background wherein there is avoidance of contact with the feared outside world. These findings invite testable hypotheses within new prospective studies" (544).

Since this study, other researchers, including Victoria Sullivan and Sadhana Damani, healthcare professionals, both of whom are vegetarian, have sought to expand upon, bolster, or counter Kadambari, Gowers, and Crisp's findings. In their 2000 study "Vegetarianism and Eating Disorders: Partners in Crime?," which appeared in the *European Eating Disorders Review*, Sullivan and Damani assert that their own vegetarianism "never stopped [them from] eating" and that, as vegetarians, they feel protective of that identity and "would like to be able to state categorically that there is no association between vegetarianism and eating disorders" (265). But even as their study points to some contradictory findings with regard to the connection between eating disorders and a vegetarian diet, they ultimately note that "although the evidence on the whole is limited and contradictory, it does seem that there is at least a passing association between vegetarianism and dietary restraint, and possibly eating disorders"

(265)—at least with regard to adolescent female vegetarians. The waters are murkier when it comes to analyses of adult female vegetarians, and the authors note a 1995 study that found that adult female "vegetarians had lower restraint scores than non-vegetarians" (264; see also Janelle and Barr).

And more recent studies seem to corroborate and expound upon the connections between vegetarianism and anorexia, particularly within adolescent female anorectics. In his 2011 study, *Some We Love, Some We Hate, Some We Eat: Why It's So Hard to Think Straight about Animals*, Hal Herzog quotes a former vegetarian anorectic named "Staci" (an alias) who notes that as a teenager, "being a vegetarian was a way for me to have more control over my body by taking the fat out of my diet," and she notes as well that vegetarianism appealed to her because of its "righteousness": "At that age, you want to have something that is strong and clear and righteous" (197). Herzog further bolsters the connection between vegetarianism and eating disorders by offering the support of Maria Lindeman, a psychology professor at the University of Helsinki who notes, as Herzog claims, "Teenage vegetarianism is sometimes symptomatic of underlying emotional issues," including—in addition to eating disorders—depression, low self-esteem, and negative worldviews (198). Speaking of a 2012 study in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, Melissa Jeltsen notes that, while this research does not argue that being vegetarian causes eating disorders or that being vegetarian is unhealthy, "it suggests vegetarianism can be a symptom of an eating disorder for some women," given the fact that of women with histories of eating disorders, "68 percent said there was a relationship between the two." The researchers found that "52 percent of women with a history of eating disorders had been vegetarian at some point in their lives" (Jeltsen; see also Bardone-Cone et al.). Jeltsen quotes Vanessa Kane-Alves, a registered dietitian who was not involved in the study: "Going vegetarian can be another way to cut out a food category, or a number of food categories, if you become vegan." Kane-Alves sees a declaration of vegetarianism/veganism as a more "socially acceptable way to restrict foods" than other dishonest options available to women with eating disorders.

I want to focus at this point on several key terms that crop up in these studies, as well as make some connections back to some of the earlier terms used to describe the death-by-veganism phenomenon, as I find many of these terms telling with regard to how the discourse about vegetarianism and eating disorders links the two in problematic and, I would argue, completely inaccurate ways. To return for a moment to Cole and Morgan's study, discussed at the beginning of this chapter, in terms of discourse analysis, "the focus on diet and specifically on dietary 'restriction,' in much of the extant literature, tends to perpetuate a vegetarian-as-deviance model that fosters aca-

demic misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the meaning of veganism for vegans" (136). Kadambari, Gowers, and Crisp's categorization of certain types of vegetarianism as "severe" fosters just such a model as it works to elide the rhetoric of illness (severely ill) with the notion of vegetarianism; "severe" is negatively connoted. Similarly, while "righteous"—the adjective used by "Staci," the formerly eating disordered vegetarian in Herzog's book—denotes morally upstanding and defensible behavior, its associations with self-righteousness are nonetheless clear, particularly with regard to the discourse about vegetarian diets in general and vegan diets in particular.[9] Furthermore, the use of this term also provides a linkage between dietary restriction and religious ideology that is present throughout the history of anorexia and within much of the news coverage of the death-by-veganism cases. Finally, Nina Planck's assertion that "food is more important than fashion" in her "Death by Veganism" article puts forth a common claim, that a plant-based diet is faddish, more about participating in something cool than about acting out of an ethical or health-supportive imperative.

And attention to fashion and being fashionable has also long been considered to be an underlying cause of anorexia, even as claiming a strong correlation between the two essentially undermines the complexity of the psychological factors that contribute to anorexia.[10] According to Arthur Crisp and his collaborators in "The Enduring Nature of Anorexia Nervosa," "as to the role of 'fashion,' this appears to the authors as one of the notions that effectively trivializes the disorder, as does the term 'eating disorder' which bears the same relationship to the psychopathology of anorexia nervosa as does a cough to cancer of the lung" (151). As should be clear, the focus on fashion in both cases—anorexia and veganism—serves to link veganism to disordered consumption and to trivialize both categories. And what should also be clear is the fact that much of the language used to describe disordered eating is exactly the same language that is used to describe vegetarian and vegan diets, particularly when women choose these diets. Veganism—as the most "severe" form of vegetarianism—is rendered disordered by virtue of the rhetoric that constructs it, quite simply because in a culture that is so fixated on a meat-based diet as standard, the language of deviance is the only language available with which to render nonnormative dietary choices.

There are a few studies that challenge the abundance of others out there linking vegetarianism to anorexia. First, B. Fisak and colleagues' 2006 "Challenging Previous Conceptions of Vegetarianism and Eating Disorders," published in the journal *Eating and Weight Disorders: Studies in Anorexia, Bulimia and Obesity*, examined adult—not teenage—women and did something that the other studies do not do: it examined the motives for vegetarianism and discovered, unsurprisingly, that vegetarians "tend to avoid animal products for ethical and health reasons rather than as an excuse or cover for dietary restraint" (199). Further, the authors note that "monitoring food intake to

avoid ingesting animal products and the fact that the majority of the Western population is not V [vegetarian] may influence the responses of Vs" (195), an assertion that calls for a recognition of how the nonnormative nature of vegetarianism influences and shapes the rhetoric employed in discussions of it. The authors conclude that prior studies have argued that vegetarianism "may be an attempt to mask disordered eating," while their "study expanded upon prior research by making a variety of comparisons with psychometrically sound measures of eating disorders" to discover that "in contrast to previous findings, Vs and NVs [nonvegetarians] did not differ significantly on any eating disturbance measures" (198). Sixty-four women, or 25 percent of those studied, considered themselves lacto-ovo vegetarians (they ate dairy and eggs but not meat), and only nineteen women, or 7.7 percent, considered themselves vegan. This study sought to differentiate between different types of nonnormative eating—all of which, at their core, are dependent on eating some configuration of less animal protein than what is found in the Standard American Diet. That vegans and other groups are differentiated in ways that do not qualify their positions as pathological, extreme, severe, radical, or militant seems both important and positive. Nonetheless, of the sample group of 256 college-age women studied, the majority (57.1 percent, or 145 women) considered themselves only "quasi-vegetarian," indicating that they do not consume red meat but do consume some form of white meat. This figure and the term "quasi-vegetarian" are extremely problematic in a study designed to focus on vegetarians.

The anorexia studies I discuss above focus on the links between vegetarianism, not veganism (unless veganism is considered a subset of vegetarianism, or unless veganism is, by and large, treated as analogous to vegetarianism), and anorexia, and I think there are complex reasons at work for why vegetarianism *might* in some cases function as a kind of screen to mask or explain so-called disordered eating, while veganism, for the most part, does not really factor into the rhetoric of these studies. In all honesty, I find it completely unsurprising that vegetarianism and adolescent female anorexia are in some instances linked, even for reasons other than the fact that adolescent girls may very well lie about being vegetarian in order to abstain from eating. And speaking of lying about behavior, adolescents lie all the time in order to hide subversive, countercultural, and dangerous behaviors from adults; anorexic teenagers are only one such example. Consider another. First, if a person lies about being vegetarian—for whatever reason, whether to mask an eating disorder or to impress a girlfriend who is a vegetarian—but eats meat (is an omnivore) or does not eat anything at all (is an anorectic), that person is not really a vegetarian; that person is lying. Nonetheless, there are studies that continually link vegetarianism to eating disorders, even when the anorectic is *not* a vegetarian. I believe that these studies continue to proliferate because vegetarianism is represented via the same rhetoric of pathology that is used to

describe anorexia and because female vegetarianism constitutes a choice that offers a challenge both to patriarchy and to a dietary norm dependent upon that patriarchy.

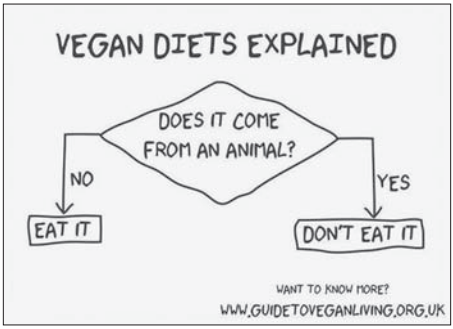
Ben Merriman's 2010 article, "Gender Differences in Family and Peer Reaction to the Adoption of a Vegetarian Diet," posits just such a reality. Merriman conducted a study in 2008 during which he interviewed twenty-three ethical vegetarians at a public university in the southern United States. Of these twenty-three, twelve were women and eleven were men. All were white. Merriman notes that the sample was "mostly consistent with the demographic of American vegetarians as a whole" (421), and his study revealed that "despite the traditional association between meat-eating and masculinity, this study revealed that men who adopted a vegetarian diet did not meet with disapproval from friends and family. Women . . . however, were very likely to face hostile reactions . . . exclusively from women participants' *male* friends and family members" (421). Furthermore, Merriman's study revealed that for these women, "diet often became a point of significant contention with challenges lasting months or years" (423). Finally, because for young women both anorexia and vegetarianism may be indicative, as Brumberg asserts about anorexia, of "*mentalities* in transition" (*Fasting* 99), they are unrealized identity formations called upon to allow adolescent women to participate in rites of passage into a full adult female community that simply does not exist.

Final Thoughts

A study by C. Alix Timko, Julia M. Hormes, and Janice Chubski published in the June 2012 issue of the journal *Appetite* is titled "Will the Real Vegetarian Please Stand Up? An Investigation of Dietary Restraint and Eating Disorder Symptoms in Vegetarians versus Non-vegetarians." It is the sole analysis to address the ways that previous studies are flawed, and it seeks to account for their inconsistencies by looking at the ways that distinctions between different categories of nonnormative dietary choices are often conflated: "A possible explanation for these inconsistent findings is that there are major differences between semi-vegetarians and vegetarians (who are often combined into one group), with semi-vegetarians exhibiting more dietary restraint than vegetarians. The hypothesis is supported by findings that suggest that semi-vegetarians are twice as likely than true vegetarians to restrict their meat intake for weight reasons" (983). Within most of the studies examined by these authors, "vegetarianism is defined as eliminating red meat; however, that does not reflect a *true* vegetarian diet" (983, my emphasis). The authors define vegetarianism as "a spectrum of inter-related food selection and food avoidance patterns" (982) that includes, in this study as in those that precede it, the category of semivegetarian, people who undertake a "partial restriction

of meat" (983), as well as ovo vegetarians, lacto-ovo vegetarians, and, finally, vegans, a group that excludes "all red meat, fish, poultry, dairy, and other animal-origin foods such as eggs from their diet, and generally also avoid[s] non-edible animal products such as leather" (982). Because they predicate their findings on the realization that there are "problems with the operational definition of 'vegetarian'" (983) in the majority of these previous studies that posit a link between vegetarianism and anorexia, the authors' conclusions are markedly different from those of their predecessors.

Prior to discussing those results, I want to return to the "operational definition" issue that plagues these studies. The *Oxford English Dictionary*'s definition of "vegetarian" is "a person who abstains from eating animal food and lives principally or wholly on a plant-based diet; *esp.* a person who avoids meat and often fish but who will consume dairy products and eggs in addition to vegetable foods." Even this definition, while more absolute in what defines the appropriate parameters of a vegetarian diet, still allows for the possible inclusion of fish, and such a potential clearly indicates at least a modicum of fluidity with regard to a vegetarian diet, even as it allows for the continual and seemingly unending debate about what does and what does not constitute vegetarianism. But including people who simply do not eat red meat or who abstain from meat *sometimes* (semivegetarians or "quasi vegetarians," depending on the study) in studies that focus on the supposed connections between a vegetarian diet and eating disorders would necessarily generate results that have little or nothing to do with the purported subject of the study. People who do not eat red meat but still eat other meats—pork, chicken, and fish—are not vegetarians; they are omnivores. People who abstain from eating meat sometimes are not vegetarians; they, likewise, are omnivores. Timko, Hormes, and Chubski's assertion that the category of semivegetarian or quasi vegetarian does not constitute "true" vegetarianism indicates the inverse, that such people are "false" vegetarians—they are not vegetarians at all. And to start one's study with a false premise would seem to nullify whatever results follow thereafter.



Cartoon created by the Vegan Society. www.vegansociety.com.

Given the importance of this heretofore unacknowledged distinction between "true" vegetarians and those classified as semivegetarian, Timko, Hormes, and Chubski's study found that true vegetarians are "less likely to participate in . . . weight control behaviors than semi-vegetarians" (983),

that "given the wide variety of reasons for choosing a vegetarian diet . . . it is unlikely that vegetarianism is in and of itself enough to be a risk factor in developing an eating disorder" (983), and—most importantly—that "it may be that it is not vegetarianism *per se* that leads to disordered eating, but rather a partial restriction of meat . . . for the purposes of weight loss" (983). In other words, omnivorous dietary restriction (dieting), not vegetarianism, might lead to disordered eating (which seems somewhat obvious). The authors note explicitly the paucity of studies that have looked at true vegetarianism (i.e., vegetarianism) "or even veganism" (983), but while these authors still consider this bizarre category of semivegetarians in their study, they do work to clarify the various so-called vegetarian categories and to "clarify the correlates of a true vegetarian diet" (983). They hypothesized that "vegans and vegetarians would have healthier attitudes towards food" and would present less pathological attitudes toward food than their semivegetarian (hereafter omnivorous) counterparts (983). Their findings supported this hypothesis: "Vegans and true vegetarians had significantly lower levels of restraint, external eating, hedonistic hunger, and greater levels of acceptance in relation to food in comparison to semi-vegetarians. This highlights previously unacknowledged positive aspects of adhering to a completely meat or animal product free diet. . . . [And] vegans appear to have *the healthiest attitudes towards food*" (989, my emphasis).

To my mind—and, I would argue, to the mind of anyone who is a "true" vegetarian—one can no more be semivegetarian than one can be semi-pregnant; to be vegetarian is not to eat meat, and, perhaps unsurprisingly, I invoke again the definitional debate that attempts to differentiate "legitimate" from some other supposed "illegitimate" category of rape that I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. In both instances, women's solid realities become fodder for rhetorical adjustment that undermines the *realness* of both circumstances.[11] In this case, consistently to attempt to link eating disorders to vegetarianism by examining a category of people who are *not* vegetarian further works to pathologize nonstandard eating by creating a false category of vegetarianism, one that could and does easily encompass the majority of omnivorous eaters.

Much negative criticism has been leveled at Rory Friedman and Kim Barnouin for their 2005 diet/vegan manifesto *Skinny Bitch*'s equation of "healthy = skinny. Unhealthy = fat" (11). Hal Herzog quips at the end of his discussion of the linkages between vegetarianism and eating disorders, "The *Skinny Bitch* admonition . . . is dead wrong" (*Some We Love* 199), and A. Breeze Harper takes the authors to task for the book's assertion that women's laziness keeps them from changing their diets by pointing out the authors' complete disregard of racial and class positions that make dietary change incredibly difficult

for certain groups of women ("Going Beyond" 161). While advocating for a vegan diet, Friedman and Barnouin's book does work to educate their young female audience about the science behind why sugar, cigarettes, processed and high-fat foods, and alcohol are nutritionally problematic and, perhaps, to give them the kind of roadmap that I was lacking when I was nineteen and decided to become vegetarian. But that this book does what it does in a way that (overtly) champions thinness and (covertly) advocates a vegan diet created the controversy—and to be "skinny" and female is often to be considered anorexic, whether or not one is "disordered," particularly in a culture that so constantly scrutinizes and treats as suspect the female body in whatever form it may take. Julie Klausner states in her *Salon* review of the book, "Nowhere on the outside of the book . . . does the copy suggest its agenda to make vegans of women seeking tiny butts; that's just a sneaky surprise. Rory Freedman and Kim Barnouin . . . have . . . create[d] the bait-and-switch diet book of the year. This book is a PETA pamphlet in chick-lit clothing and an innovative fusion of animal-rights activism with punitive dieting tactics that prey on women's insecurities about their bodies." In working to reclaim vegan identity from its more negative associations—as Kathy Patalsky notes, "Rory and Kim created a new identity for the vegan girls out there. We didn't have to be 'health-obsessed-crazy-vegans.' We could now be skinny bitches"—Friedman and Barnouin have wandered into a world of trouble, a discourse of loaded rhetoric that has long maintained the supposed connection between nonstandard diets and disorder, particularly if those diets are eaten by women. And the veganism that underlies the project in *Skinny Bitch* is used to further call into question its motives, as such a diet is considered "punitive" (Klausner), particularly in the hands of young, presumably insecure women.

Bringing the *Skinny Bitch* controversy into the discussion is not to indicate that the authors necessarily "got it right" but rather that the book is both a culmination of and a rallying cry against the real and theoretical linkages between nonstandard eating, women, and disorder—and between issues of external and internal control of female bodies. That the authors positioned their animal-rights agenda in a way that seemingly hides it speaks as well to the ways that a very real commitment to animal advocacy as a primary reason for adopting a vegan diet, particularly for white women, who constitute the book's audience, remains largely absent from much of the discourse about veganism, even to the point that vegan authors feel obligated, perhaps, to mask their agenda: for women, dieting is always an acceptable body project, even as women's dietary choices are so closely scrutinized. Veganism, however, is suspect, subversive, and dangerous. Cole and Morgan's study does much work to disempower the delegitimizing effect that negative, trivializing, and dismissive rhetoric has with regard to veganism: "Making veganism sound outlandish or difficult, and misrepresenting the motivations of vegan-

ism as consumer choice, enables non-vegans to treat veganism as a curiosity, at best, or a dangerous obsession at worst. . . . The disarticulation of veganism from animals' rights obliterates the anti-speciesist heart of veganism and protects the mainstream omnivorous culture from criticism" (149). Overtly including animal rights in discussions about why many women choose to become vegan certainly will not alleviate the negative discourse about veganism that pervades both the mainstream media and scientific studies of the links between nonnormative diet and eating disorders, but it would certainly allow for more honest analysis of the real reasons why women choose to be vegan, and it might empower instead of pathologize such a choice as having less to do with restricting female diet and more to do with making productive connections between health, feminism, and animal welfare. In the following chapter, I consider these same issues in the context of masculinity by exploring how the linkages between health and animal welfare impact and shape popular representations of male veganism.

CHAPTER 5

Men, Meat, and Hegan Identity

Veganism and the Discourse of Masculinity

There is a scene in Edgar Wright's 2010 film *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World* (based on the graphic novel series by Bryan Lee O'Malley) during which Scott (Michael Cera) must do battle with Todd Ingram (Brandon Routh), one of Ramona Flowers's (Mary Elizabeth Winstead) "seven evil exes," all of whom Scott must defeat in order to date her. Todd is a bass-playing rock star, and because he is a vegan, he has superpowers; he can levitate and read Scott's mind. After Todd blasts Scott through several walls by the sheer force of an expertly delivered power chord, Scott tricks Todd into drinking coffee that contains half-and-half (and not the promised soy milk), which prompts a visit from the vegan police (Thomas Jane and Clifton Collins Jr.), who tell Todd, "No vegan diet, no vegan powers." Todd pleads innocence, professing that he was tricked and pointing out that he is allowed three strikes prior to having his vegan powers revoked. The officers tell him that, prior to this instance, he also "knowingly ingested gelato" (Todd says, "Gelato isn't vegan?" to which Jane's officer responds, "It's milk and eggs, bitch") and also previously "partook of a plate of chicken parmesan," an assertion that elicits a gasp from his current—and Scott's past—girlfriend, Envy Adams (Brie Larson). Looking her way, Todd asks, "Chicken's not vegan?" and the officers fire their deveganizing ray, which strips Todd of his powers and causes his perfectly styled hair to fall flat.

Thomas Jane and Clifton Collins Jr. as the vegan police in *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World*.

As silly as this scene is, it does provide some valid commentary about the discourse surrounding masculinity and veganism. Todd's superpowers, expressed when he tells Scott that he can see that in Scott's "mind's eye" he put half-and-half in one of the two cups of coffee "in an attempt to make [Todd] break vegan edge," constitute a concrete manifestation of the ways that veganism in general, whether practiced by men or women, is often per-

ceived and depicted as a form of self-righteous moral superiority. But in the context of Todd's deveganization, his status as male is of prime significance. For Todd, veganism functions as a disingenuous way to impress a woman, Envy Adams, who is shocked and revolted when she learns that he has eaten chicken. Furthermore, veganism for Todd—and for men in general—is depicted as impossible to maintain. Todd may profess to being vegan, but he is really an omnivore, a dietary choice more appropriately masculine, because to be vegan is to be unnatural (even if it affords one special powers); for men, it is to go against their essential dietary nature.

As should be apparent from the previous chapter, women's bodies and diets are heavily scrutinized entities, particularly when choices made with regard to those bodies and diets fall outside the purview of a perceived acceptable standard. Unlike the scrutiny and criticism leveled at women for their dietary choices, however, according to C. Wesley Buerkle, "discussing men's relationship to food seems unusual in that we typically focus our attention on women's negotiation of eating and body image concerns." Further, "men's eating goes largely unnoticed, whereas women often feel the social norms for proper eating weighing upon them" (253). While these assertions may by and large be true, there has been, in the past several decades, more attention focused on men's nonnormative dietary choices and the role that such choices play in a perceived crisis of white, heterosexual masculinity marked by women's and minorities' increased access to spheres of power and influence, circumstances that challenge more traditional gender roles.

In the face of perceived female empowerment and subsequent shifts in the diets of many men away from "masculine" fare—red meat and potatoes—toward more ethical and healthful choices, some of which may be non-Western in nature, a discursive space has opened for the negotiation of new, nonnormative masculinities that challenge our traditional understandings of what it means to be manly. Despite the fact that men have historically found themselves much less theoretically constrained and qualified in terms of their dietary choices (and I say "theoretically" because I am not taking into consideration socioeconomic and sociohistoric factors that would qualify men's access to certain foods), as the dominant sex, in many ways, men have more to lose by challenging standard dietary options than do women. As Matthew B. Ruby and Steven J. Heine note, "In North America, manhood is still considered a precarious state, easily lost and requiring constant validation. Through purposefully abstaining from meat, a widely established symbol of power, status, and masculinity, it seems that the vegetarian man is perceived as more principled, but less manly, than his omnivorous counterparts" (450). In this chapter, I examine various mainstream visual and print media in order to analyze the discourse surrounding perceptions of male veganism—particularly the ultramasculine category of "heganism"—and the cultural backlash against a perceived crisis in masculinity that such an identity category has engendered.

The discourse of this backlash, unsurprisingly, mandates that meat is an essential, primal, and inescapable component of heterosexual masculinity and that male refusal to eat meat signals weakness, emasculation, and un-American values. Melanie Joy, who coined the term "carnism" as essentially the adverse of veganism, notes that keeping animals and animal agriculture invisible in the production of meat allows us to care about certain animals (e.g., dogs) and eat others, simply because we believe that this is "just the way things are." Joy writes:

> We send one species to the butcher and give our love and kindness to another apparently for no reason other than because *it's the way things are*. When our attitudes and behaviors towards animals are so inconsistent, and this inconsistency is so unexamined, we can safely say we have been fed absurdities. . . . Our choices as consumers drive an industry that kills ten billion animals per year in the United States alone. . . . What could cause an entire society of people to check their thinking caps at the door—*and to not even realize they're doing so?* Though this question is quite complex, the answer is quite simple: carnism. (27–28)

Joy's work deconstructs the social psychology that allows for the unthinking and uncritical normalization of the consumption of meat. Similarly, the first part of Carol J. Adams's *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, "The Patriarchal Texts of Meat," focuses on the various historical narratives that shape our belief that meat is the substrate of male strength and power. She carefully deconstructs a vast array of texts that includes fairy tales, unwritten food taboos, and cookbooks, as well as historical narratives of colonial domination that champion white superiority in order to expose as fictitious the notions that meat is male food and that men need meat in order to obtain and maintain patriarchal power. She notes early in this chapter that despite the fact that people with power have always eaten meat, the narratives that support that reality work to undermine and disempower various other groups.

Adams states that "dietary habits proclaim class distinctions, but they proclaim patriarchal distinctions as well," equating second-class foods—vegetables, grains, fruits—with women. Therefore, "the sexism in meat eating recapitulates the class distinction with an added twist: a mythology permeates all classes that meat is a masculine food and meat eating is a male activity" (*Sexual Politics* 26). In addition to looking at the ways that meat is constructed as essentially male, Adams also examines how the mythology that codes meat in this way is also both an "index of racism" (29) and a mechanism that enables and justifies the colonization and subjugation of non-Western cultures by the West. She cites nineteenth-century medical doctor James Beard's assertion in support of a meat-based diet to enable intellectual and physical progress among the English: "The rice-eating Hindoo and Chinese and the potato-eating Irish peasant are kept in subjection by the well-fed English,"

who constitute a "nation of beef-eaters" (qtd. on 31). Adams's explication of meat as a tool for the maintenance of patriarchy and the enforcement of imperialism is significant in terms of what follows, particularly with regard to U.S. imperialism post-9/11 and the way that masculinity, meat, and whiteness were enmeshed and reconstituted thereafter.

Despite the fact that, by and large, men have been able to "enjoy eating as a value free behavior" (Buerkle 253), an increasing scholarly and scientific focus on the gendered nature of diet combined with women's increased access to traditional male spheres of influence situates men's dietary choices—like women's—as political. In "Meat, Morals, and Masculinity," Ruby and Heine characterize male meat eating as "archetypal" (448), and they examine the paradoxical nature of meat, noting that "meat, long considered both nutritionally dense . . . and high in pathogen risk, is . . . the most cherished and most often tabooed category of food . . . and it is strongly linked with cultural conceptions of masculinity and power" (447). The belief in meat—particularly red meat—as essential to both manhood and power is so deeply entrenched and codified, particularly in the United States, that the proven health risks associated with its consumption have done little to deter its mythological power. In his study "Beasts, Burgers, and Hummers: Meat and the Crisis of Masculinity in Contemporary Television Advertisements," Richard Rogers situates nature as the absent referent, vis-à-vis Adams, in several probeef television commercials (in that these commercials constitute both an explicit backlash against feminism and an implicit backlash against environmentalism). Rogers attributes the power of the mythology of meat to the omnipresent discourse that surrounds its contemporary articulation: "From literature to everyday speech, from art to advertisements, the articulation of hegemonic masculinity with the consumption of meat is pervasive" (281). To undermine or challenge such a culturally pervasive archetype is an attempt to open a space in which to discuss alternative masculinities—Rogers, for example, examines the category of "metrosexuality"—but it is also, given the "precarious state" of masculinity, "easily lost and requiring constant validation" (Ruby and Heine 450), to invite resistance and to engender a profound backlash.

At Least for a Pre-9/11 Moment, Troubling the Mythology of Meat: Rod Lurie's The Contender

In *The Contender*, Rod Lurie's 2000 film of political intrigue about female vice presidential contender Laine Hanson's (Joan Allen) skewering at the hands of a Republican-led confirmation committee for supposed sexual impropriety, Bill Clinton's 1998 impeachment for his sexual indiscretions and his subse-

quent denial of any sexual encounter with Monica Lewinski operate as not-so-subtle subtext. In Lurie's film, however, Hanson neither confirms nor denies allegations (we later learn that they are untrue) that she engaged in group sex to gain entry into a sorority when she was in college, claiming that it is "beneath [her] dignity" to respond to allegations about private behavior in the context of her public confirmation hearings, chaired by Republican Shelly Runyon (Gary Oldman). Runyon asserts that "her nomination is the cancer of affirmative action," while President Jackson Evans (Jeff Bridges), serving his second term, has determined that his "swan song" will be to put a woman in the "highest level of the Executive." Hanson, a former Republican turned Democrat, is a woman unafraid to assert her principles: she stands behind her decision to vote to impeach Clinton, who she claims was "not guilty but responsible"; she is an atheist who nonetheless attends what she refers to as the "chapel of democracy"; and she is unwaveringly prochoice. In essence, Hanson is a poster girl for all things coded as liberal and feminist—and despite the smear campaign against her, the president stands by her nomination, asking that she be confirmed and that the committee uphold "the concept of making the American dream blind to gender." The film earned Oscar nominations for Allen and Bridges, even as edits made postfilming that rendered Oldman's Runyon as wholly unsympathetic caused real-life Republican Gary Oldman to denounce the film as left-wing propaganda ("Gary Oldman Dishes").[1]

Laine Hanson (Joan Allen) answering questions at her confirmation hearing in *The Contender*.

It would be completely untrue to claim that *The Contender* is a great film. Among other issues, it suffers from preachy melodrama and from the inclusion of a ridiculous subplot involving another contender for the vice presidency, Jack Hathaway (William Peterson), whose attempt to boost his popularity by staging the rescue of a drowning woman goes wrong and results in her death. But the narrative's outcome—the presumed confirmation of the first female vice president—unlikely as it may be, pointed to a political and historical moment during which the concept of a woman holding such office might be considered, as President Evans proclaims, "an idea whose time has come." And in addition to its feminist politics, the film is explicitly concerned with what its characters eat. Food, in the context of *The Contender*, is loaded with political and social meaning; as J. Hoberman notes in an article in *Sight and Sound*, "*The Contender* is a movie where you are what you eat," and "President Jackson Evans . . . is a cigarette-smoking, glad-handing blow-

hard whose main psychological quirk seems to be that he's always hungry." Indeed, in every scene in which Bridges's Evans is featured, he is either eating, drinking, or ordering food, noting that one of the best perks of being president is that anything he wants to eat he can "get in a moment's notice." We can tell Evans's social politics by the food he eats: never do we see him eat beef. Instead, he orders coq au vin, grilled cheese sandwiches, and kung pao chicken. When he confronts a young representative named Reginald Webster (Christian Slater) who seems likely to vote against Hanson's confirmation, Evans is eating a shark steak sandwich, half of which he offers to Webster. The connotations of "shark steak" are obvious; Evans is the shark circling Webster, challenging him to defy Evans's wishes, and the "steak" codes the food as manly, even if the steak comes from a fish and is not, therefore, red meat. When Webster refuses the offering of the sandwich, Evans challenges him again: "What? Are you a vegan?" At this jab, Webster acquiesces and eats the food that Evans offers.

Based on what he eats—fish and fowl—we are to code Evans as morally ambiguous at worst and good at best. But "the man whom Evans beat in the last election, Shelly Runyon, reveals his unhealthy if not murderous instincts in the grotesque gusto with which he's twice shown tucking into a big slab of bloody steak" (Hoberman). Runyon's propensity for steak is aligned with his intention, as one of his muckrakers says, to "gut the bitch [Hanson] in the belly," to treat Hanson like a hunted animal. When she meets him for lunch after he has unearthed the photos that supposedly depict her engaged in fellatio with more than one man, Runyon tells Hanson that he has ordered for her a porterhouse steak, which she refuses, asserting, "I don't eat meat. I'll just have the penne." When he disregards her wishes and tells the waiter to bring the steak anyway, Hanson again rebuffs him: "Really, I don't eat meat." This assertion leads Hoberman to state that "Hanson, of course, is some sort of vegan." Hanson's refusal to eat meat is heavily coded—and it is also easy to read as an ecofeminist action. First, Hanson is a vegan, a point made explicit by her repeated assertion that she does not eat meat. But she is also refusing to play by the rules established by the patriarchy, to eat beef (in this case), to defend her sexual and reproductive choices (during the hearing, Runyon questions her about what would happen should she become pregnant while in office), and to allow a man to choose her food for her. Finally, her assertion that she does not eat meat functions as an implicit, perhaps tongue-in-cheek denial of what she has been accused of; as Chief of Staff Kermit Newman (Sam Elliott) says, the American people can stomach many things, but "one thing that they can't stomach is a vice president with a mouth full of cock." This statement is made soon after Evans orders coq au vin, which Hanson also refuses. Hanson, a person who does not eat meat and does not ascribe to patriarchal dictates with regard to her diet or sexual behavior, will not stomach a mouth full of cock (animal flesh or male sexual organ) either.

Our first encounter with Laine Hanson is in her office, where, on her desk, she and her husband are having sex when Evans calls to ask her to be his vice president, and the film depicts her, despite her innocence in the sorority encounter, as a sexual woman fully capable of the same sexual behaviors and transgressions as the men who would judge her. When the fact that she and her husband began their relationship while he was still married comes to light, Evans asserts, "They caught you being a human being." In its refusal to allow men to ruin a woman's career because of her sexual conduct, *The Contender* lets a woman be strong, sexual, and vegan—and still get to be vice president of the United States. Hanson gets to play with the boys, even if the film is ever conscious of the fact that she is not one of them, and even as the boys still pull the strings. In many ways, Hanson is a pawn in a political game played by men, even as Newman tells her early on that her husband needs to be invisible during the confirmation process, because while a woman standing behind a man is viewed as supportive, "a husband behind his wife is perceived as a puppeteer." Evans's desire to put Hanson in office may very well be as much about his own ego as it is about any notion of gender equality that he appears to uphold, and Evans's accusing Webster of potential veganism serves to undercut any idea that such a dietary choice, while acceptable and even empowering for Hanson, would be equally acceptable for a man.

Veganism affords Hanson power to balk at the male establishment; it would, however, be interpreted as weakness in her male counterparts. Still, if patriarchal politics remain full force in *The Contender* (no one is suggesting that a woman be president, after all, and Hanson will only be allowed to serve out the remainder of Evans's final term, his previous vice president having died while in office), Hanson gets to refuse to participate, at least to an extent, in the political game that would have her either deny or admit to the sexual imbroglio in which she is accused of participating. And we get to see what it might look like if the sexual (and dietary) double standard that consistently enables gender discrimination were held up to the light and exposed. Hoberman notes that *The Contender* "allows Joan Allen to play Bill to her own Monica and emerge from the Washington cesspool satisfyingly unbesmirched. Far more than Al Gore, new Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton was Hollywood's 2000 candidate. In this sense, the movie may well be ahead of its time—a prophecy of 2004."

And Now for the Backlash: The Crisis of Masculinity, Meat, and America

A 2012 advertisement for Prilosec Wildberry, an over-the-counter medication for heartburn and acid reflux, features stand-up comedian Larry the Cable Guy (whose real name is Daniel Lawrence Whitney), known for his member-

ship in the comedy troupe the Blue Collar Comedy Tour.[2] Larry, wearing his signature sleeveless plaid shirt, baseball cap, and worn jeans, stands beside the fiberglass statue known as "Bunyon's [*sic*] Statue," located in Atlanta, Illinois. This nineteen-foot-tall depiction of the legendary Paul Bunyan holds a hot dog instead of an ax. The Prilosec ad's text reads "Life, liberty and the pursuit of flavor. It's your American right." The ad positions the famous lumberjack giant from American folklore next to the working-class, blue-collar comedian, with Larry appearing as the giant in this case, towering over the statue.

The text lets us know that for men who work hard—both in the mythological past (Paul Bunyan was not a real person and in fact may be an example of "fakelore," a being created in the early twentieth century as part of a marketing campaign for a logging company) and in the fictional present (Larry is not a cable guy, and his southern accent is fake)—"the pursuit of flavor" is an "American right."[3] The explicit flavor in question is the "Wildberry" flavor of Prilosec's new product, but more implicit is the flavor of meat, inherently indicated by the hotdog that the Bunyon statue holds. Real American men have a right to eat meat, even as the ad also indicates that doing so will necessarily cause such problematic issues as heartburn and acid reflux disease. The ad does not advocate for a moderate or healthful diet, insisting instead that men pursue the foods that they should, as Americans, rightfully consume and then take medication to deal with the consequences. To do otherwise would be both unmanly *and* un-American.

Despite the forward-thinking politics of *The Contender*, the first decade of the twenty-first century was punctuated by a post-9/11 media backlash—as represented in the Prilosec ad—against a perceived undermining, by women and people of color, of white men's position at the proverbial top of the food chain; furthermore, that threat was being enacted through the food chain via un-American and feminine plant-based diets. In print advertisements, television commercials, news articles, and film, the (often homosocially depicted) male activity of eating meat—both as a source of masculine power and as a food staple compromised by women's increasingly felt influence in areas of life previously accessible only to men—was situated as a way of righting a supposed crisis of masculinity. Particularly in response to increased attention to vegetarian and vegan diets that took place at the end of the twentieth century, the media backlash during the first decade of the twenty-first century and into the current decade has engendered not only a glorification of red meat and blue-collar work but also a profound denunciation of vegetarian and vegan diets as indicators of weakness, ethnicity, and femininity, all of which have been constructed as threats to a traditional "American" way of life. Not that this way of thinking constitutes anything new. As Adams notes, worldwide and throughout history, "vegetables and other nonmeat foods are

viewed as women's food. This makes them undesirable to men" (*Sexual Politics* 27), but at a cultural moment during which it at least felt as if the masculine mythology of meat was beginning to give way, cowboy culture reasserted itself and all of its trappings. As Susan Faludi notes in *The Terror Dream*, "Within days of the [9/11] attack, a number of media venues sounded the death knell of feminism. In light of the national tragedy, the women's movement had proved itself . . . 'an unaffordable luxury' that had now 'met its Waterloo.' The terrorist assault had levied 'a blow to feminism,' or, as a headline on the op-ed page of the *Houston Chronicle* pithily put it, 'No Place for Feminist Victims in a Post-9-11 America'" (21). Suddenly there was no place for someone like Lane Hanson, no space for alternative masculinities, and certainly no room on the plate for tofu.

Furthermore, as if to counter *The Contender*'s mythological narrative of a vegan woman achieving heretofore unprecedented political power, during the 2008 presidential campaign Sarah Palin and Hillary Clinton, the two women with the most viable chances of being contenders for the Republican vice presidential and the Democratic presidential nominations, respectively, both loudly asserted not only that they were omnivorous but that they were hunters who killed animals for sport. At a campaign stop in Wausau, Wisconsin, Clinton told the crowd, "My father taught me how to hunt. I went duck hunting in Arkansas. I remember standing in that cold water, so cold, at first light. I was with a bunch of my friends, all men. The sun's up, the ducks are flying and they are playing a trick on me. They said, 'we're not going to shoot, you shoot.' They wanted to embarrass me. The pressure was on. So I shot, and I shot a banded duck and they were surprised as I was" (qtd. in Suarez). Likewise, according to the *Guardian*, Palin "is a lifelong member of the National Rifle Association, a keen hunter whose favorite meal is moose-burger." In her 2009 memoir, *Going Rogue: An American Life*, written after her party's election loss, Palin asserts her identity as a meat eater: "If any vegans came over for dinner, I could whip them up a salad, then explain my philosophy of being a carnivore: *if God had not intended for us to eat animals, how come He made them out of meat?*" (133).

Clearly, in 2008 the women who aspired to enter the hallowed all-male realm that constitutes the highest political offices in the United States were required not only to consume meat but also to take an unequivocal stance with regard to their status as omnivores.[4] According to Steven G. Kellman, "meat continues to be a totem of masculinity, and women such as Palin who aspire to positions in the patriarchal power structure must go out of their way to prove their bona fides as belligerent beefeaters" (536). He notes the ease with which Dennis Kucinich, vegan congressman from Ohio, was marginalized in his bid for the 2008 Democratic presidential nomination. Of Clinton's assertion of her shooting a duck to impress her friends—"all men"—Kellman comments that "as the first woman with a credible bid for the White House, Hillary Clin-

ton, whose daughter Chelsea had confessed to the girlish quirk of shunning animal protein, assured crowds . . . that she was a lifelong hunter and thus could be counted on to do a man's job" (536).

But despite their attempts to assert their suitability for high political office by establishing their affinity for meat and for killing animals, meat eating and hunting were not enough to overcome such deeply entrenched and systematic sexism that permitted the critique of both women's bodies in ways that undermined their attempts to situate themselves as serious political contenders. According to John A. Farrell, in the press, Clinton was referred to as "a tank, a scold, a lousy mother, a lesbian, a bitch. Hecklers called on her to iron their shirts. In major media outlets, commentators said she was a castrating harpy. . . . The *New York Times* described her laugh as a witch-like 'cackle,'" while Palin was "the 'caribou Barbie,' ripped apart by Katie Couric and lampooned by Tina Fey. . . . [A]nd, after the election, McCain campaign staffers called her a diva, a whack job, a hillbilly, an addictive shopper, a narcissist."[5] Regardless of their attempts to establish their credibility by hunting and by eating like men, simply being female proved too detrimental to both women's political aspirations. It was simply too soon to allow a woman serious consideration for the highest office in the land, given the fact, as Sean Hogan notes, that "you can't lose two enormous phallic symbols from the southern, business end of the toughest city in the United States and expect to come out with your masculinity undisturbed." For Hogan, "the post-traumatic stress disorder we still feel as a nation has turned this already male-dominated society into a walking stereotype."

Around this same period, a slew of television commercials played on men's fear of emasculation at the hands of liberated women and empowered minorities by situating the act of eating red meat as synonymous with a social movement aimed at liberating men from the domesticating influences of women's dietary proscriptions and restoring men's rightful place in the cultural hierarchy. Burger King's 2006 "Manthem" ad featured men engaging in a mock liberation movement that satirized the women's movement (the main male sings, "I am man, hear me roar . . . and I'm way too hungry to settle for chick food," in mock homage to Helen Reddy's 1971 single "I Am Woman"), while Hummer's 2006 "Tofu" ad sought to "restore the balance"—and this is the text that appeared at the end of the ad—by having a tofu-and-vegetable-purchasing man buy a Hummer after standing in a grocery store checkout line next to another man who is purchasing slabs of red meat for a barbeque. Since both cattle production and incredibly fuel-inefficient cars are, of course, destructive to the environment, the idea that purchasing a Hummer "restores the balance" is somewhat true; the purchase of the Hummer allows this man to participate in the same environmental destruction as his meat-eating counterpart. Hillshire Farms' 2008

"Go Meat" campaign featured a television ad in which men at backyard grills yelled to each other "Go meat!" over picket fences in a call-and-response military-style chant, and a series of late twentieth-century and twenty-first-century Hardee's commercials, featuring the tag line "more than a piece of meat," featured scantily clad women apparently receiving sexual gratification from eating hamburgers.

I want to look at two ads, the aforementioned Burger King "Manthem" ad and Hardee's 2009 Western Bacon Thickburger commercial, which featured Padma Lakshmi, model, cookbook author, and host of Bravo's reality series *Top Chef*, in order to unpack the ways that these commercials—and others like them—bolster male insecurities about a mythological crisis of masculinity that can be solved by erasing women from the picture (by featuring the act of meat eating as a homosocial activity) or by sexualizing them, turning them into consumable objects by conflating them with meat. Furthermore, in addition to the overt misogyny inherent in these commercials, a tacit discourse of racism and xenophobia emerges as well in the ads' explicit celebration of both whiteness and the Standard American Diet. Via the sexualization of women in these ads, the consumption of meat also becomes pornographic, as women's bodies and meat are rendered objects for male consumption.

Burger King's 2006 "Manthem" commercial features a twenty-something white man who abandons his female dinner companion—an attractive and ethnically coded, dark-skinned, dark-haired woman—after he is served what appears to be an amuse-bouche (a single, bite-sized hors d'oeuvre) at an upscale restaurant.[6] The man looks at the camera and in a parody of Helen Reddy's "I Am Woman" sings, "I am man, hear me roar / in numbers too big to ignore, / and I'm way too hungry to settle for chick food."[7] He throws down his napkin and heads to a Burger King to get a Texas Double Whopper, and the camera focuses in on a black man who lifts his burger into the air and sings along with the protagonist, "Man, that's good!" As the commercial progresses, more men join in solidarity, noting that they admit to having "been fed quiche," but now they "wave tofu bye-bye / . . . it's for Whopper beef I reach." These men, who comprise a mix of races and ethnicities and who signify, by virtue of their clothing (business suits on some, jeans and T-shirts on others, some sporting backpacks, some wearing hard hats and "wife-beater" sleeveless shirts), all social strata, walk away from their female companions and march into the street, proclaiming, "I will eat this meat / till my innie turns into an outie."

In their homosocial act of bonding, these men are depicted simultaneously casting off their refinement, and by the end of the commercial, the focus is on a working-class ethos embraced by all of the men featured—a number that swells into the dozens over the course of the commercial. These men are "starved" and "incorrigible"; one man burns his briefs in a reference to

the supposed women's bra burning of 1968 in Atlantic City, New Jersey.[8] The men push a minivan (out of which a disgruntled man emerges; he shrugs and takes the burger that is handed to him by another man) off a bridge. The van falls into a dump truck, which is pulled by a strong man toward a Whopper sitting in a shovel held by a blonde woman; she is dressed in a tight pink tank top and tights. The narrative, which begins with a fashionable, thin, stylishly coiffured young man, ends with a heavyset, bald strongman wearing a black sleeveless T-shirt and pulling a dump truck toward a shovel—all of which are attributes of blue-collar manual labor. Despite its initial depiction of men of a variety of races, at the end of the ad (as at the beginning), the focus is on a white man, this time one who embodies a working-class, blue-collar ethos.

Much has been written about the gender politics of the "Manthem" commercial both in scholarly journals and in online venues. Richard Rogers discusses the ways that this ad posits that "women have emasculated men through the ingredients as well as the preparation style of their preferred food" (294). Not only do men abandon the so-called chick food items of quiche and tofu, which is not "just *nonmeat*, it is *antimeat*" (291), the men in the "Manthem" commercial abandon women as well, opting instead for "a homosocial gathering of men" (294). Women appear, briefly, at the beginning and end of the ad; the first woman, like the dinner date who discards her, is well dressed and elegant. She wears a black dress and simple jewelry, and her long dark hair is pulled back from her face by a headband. The woman at the end is sexualized, both blonde and wearing tight pink clothing, posed with her legs apart and taunting the strong man with a burger; at this moment, woman and burger are elided, and the act of obtaining and eating the burger is rendered synonymous to obtaining and fucking the woman. Rogers's analysis points out all the ways that this ad plays upon a perceived crisis of masculinity: by conflating certain foods (tofu, quiche), consumer items (minivans), and careers (white collar) with femininity and weakness, the commercial posits eating beef as "both rebellious and a reclaiming of privilege lost" (296). C. Wesley Buerkle reads the ad as "a literal protest of men against perceived effeminization" (252): the man will eat meat until his "innie"—a clear reference to a vagina—turns into an "outie"—a penis. Buerkle also reads the commercial as a reaction to metrosexuality, an emerging masculinity that seeks to elevate and recognize as legitimately heterosexual those behaviors—interest in fashion, food, fitness, refined style, and culture—that historically have been codified as more appropriate to gay men or to women.

Buerkle reads meat eating as "a performance that specifically excludes and rejects femininity" (254), and he notes the fact that the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine criticized the "Manthem" commercial for encouraging men "to court heart disease and other life-threatening illnesses" (261). While fast-food venues have consistently sought to align their food with a per-

ceived turn toward healthier diets (think, for example, of McDonald's Happy Meal's option of fruit instead of fries), the "Manthem" commercial (like the Prilosec ad) takes the opposite approach, positioning real masculinity as an affront to healthy eating, asserting instead a kind of challenge to the burger (and to women) to do its worst; real men can handle it. This commercial and others like it put forth the idea that there is an underlying and essential form of masculinity that refuses to respond to an evolutionary imperative; in this context, eating beef is inescapably biologically necessary for men. Buerkle works to position such behavior as performative and notes that "men's cognition of their food choices and appearances—their gender performance—jeopardizes hetero-masculine hegemony by questioning the presumption that 'men are men' and have a natural right to their privilege" (262).

To acknowledge the performance is to undermine the foundation on which essentialism rests with regard to either men and meat or any other gendered behavior. The commercial operates as a parody of women's struggles against real inequalities, and through this act of parody, which engages a kind of mock masculinity, it works to reinforce the misogyny that it ostensibly sends up as humorous. If the truly oppressed are its agents, then parody, like colonial mimicry, works to reveal the mechanisms of power that allow for one group to subordinate another.[9] But when parody is undertaken by the dominant group to make fun of the subordinate, the effect is to enact the very behavior that the parody is supposed to subvert. The "Manthem" commercial implies that women have actually oppressed men and that men need to be liberated. The reality, of course, is quite different; therefore, "Manthem" merely reenacts the sexism it pretends to satirize.

"Manthem" director Bryan Buckley's profile page at his co-owned Hungry Man advertising agency website touts him as having been named the "King of the Super Bowl" by the *New York Times* for having directed over forty commercials for the Super Bowl since 2000. His short film *ASAD* was "shot in Africa with an all-Somali cast of refugees and was honored as the Best Narrative Short at the 2012 TriBeCa Film Festival" (Blust). According to an article about the "Manthem" ad in *Shoot*, despite the ad's explicit assertion that real men eat meat, Buckley had given up eating red meat years prior to making the commercial, which was shot in Rio de Janeiro, a city devoid of an actual Burger King: "The Burger King storefront seen in the spot was built for the shoot." Furthermore, "with the exception of a Canadian actor, the rest of Buckley's cast came from Brazil, and therefore spoke Portuguese. A dialect coach was brought in to teach the men, who lip sync in the spot, 'I Am Man'" ("Director Bryan Buckley"). While Brazil is not known as a particularly vegetarian friendly locale, situating both the English language and fast food—an endeavor squarely grounded in the United States—in a place where neither functions as part of the dominant discourse exposes the ways that

Burger King in particular and fast food in general, specifically fast-food beef hamburgers, engage in cultural imperialism that co-opts other cultures and peoples for consumer-driven purposes.

Because the audience for this commercial is clearly U.S. men, the fact that the dark-skinned and dark-haired woman at the beginning of the commercial is displaced by a light-skinned blonde at the end underscores a shift away from the exotic and unfamiliar—and the food that the man is served at the beginning of the commercial is, like the initial woman, indeterminate in its ethnic origin but "un-American" in its appearance nonetheless—toward the comfort and security of standard American dietary fare and standard American conceptions of white, blonde, and highly sexualized female beauty. As the man walks away from his date at the beginning of the commercial, the camera focuses for a second on her expression of disgust and disdain at his departure; by contrast, the woman at the end of the commercial smiles and entices, welcoming men's return to their rightful positions at the top of the cultural hierarchy and at the top of the food chain—and, I would argue, to the nexus of white, hegemonic, masculine power, the United States.

If the postcolonial, imperialistic, and racist reading lies somewhat beneath the surface in the "Manthem" ad, it is writ large in Hardee's 2009 Western Bacon Thickburger commercial featuring Padma Lakshmi. The ad begins with a song in medias res, the lyric "around the world" looped throughout the ad as Lakshmi says, "I've always had a love affair with food." She walks through an open-air market and handles vegetables and grains, a venue that could be anywhere on the planet. The scene feels exotic and foreign. She provides her credentials, noting that "after traveling around the world and writing cookbooks," she has "tasted every flavor imaginable." The scene shifts, and Lakshmi notes that there is "something about the Western bacon" that reminds her of high school and "sneaking out before dinner to savor that sweet spicy sauce, and leaving no evidence behind." While Lakshmi's voice-over articulates this narrative, Lakshmi sits on the front steps of a building, her dress hitched up around her thighs, and eats the burger in question—a culinary creation that consists of a third of a pound of beef, 53 grams of fat, and 900 calories (DietFacts). Lakshmi's plunging neckline reveals as much cleavage as permissible on network television, and she sits with her feet

Still from Padma Lakshmi's Hardee's commercial.

(decked out in white stiletto heels) wide apart, her knees touching. She pulls bacon from the burger, licks the burger, licks sauce off her fingers and off her wrist while the camera focuses on her chest, her half-closed eyes, and her tongue. The commercial ends with an image of the burger and a man's voice telling us that the burger, made with "100 percent black angus beef," is "more than just a piece of meat."

Lakshmi's website, Padmalakshmi.com, touts her as "the first internationally successful Indian supermodel." She is the author of two cookbooks, host of *Top Chef*, and former wife of Salman Rushdie, one of the most celebrated and controversial postcolonial novelists of all time. In addition, she was born in India and raised as a vegetarian in a Brahmin household. An article in *People* magazine notes that "Padma Lakshmi basically eats for a living, but for most of her life the *Top Chef* host had a limited diet." In the article, Lakshmi says, "I grew up a vegetarian," but when she moved to "the States, I started slowly eating meat. . . . As a teenager, [my friends and I] would always go have burgers. I would scarf them down!" (Garcia and Pardini). Just as case studies that link vegetarianism and veganism to disordered eating invoke the rhetoric of restriction with regard to such diet, the article treats Lakshmi's vegetarianism as "limited," a restriction against which she rebelled. Therefore, when Lakshmi claims in the commercial that the Western Bacon Thickburger reminds her of "sneaking out before dinner to savor that sweet spicy sauce," she is admitting to a double betrayal, both of her culture and of her vegetarian diet.

That she eats meat clandestinely, making sure to leave "no evidence behind," indicates that the act of eating meat before what one can only assume is a vegetarian dinner served by her parents is both taboo and seductive; eating meat is forbidden to Lakshmi by virtue of her status as a woman (if meat is for men and is the antithesis of "chick food") and by virtue of her vegetarianism, which is a product of her Indian Hindu culture. Lakshmi's highly sexualized act of eating meat, engineered to satisfy the male gaze, however, does not allow her access to the benefits of Western masculinity (nor is that its goal), any more than did Hillary Clinton's or Sarah Palin's omnivorous proclamations. In its employment of Lakshmi as its spokesperson, Hardee's utilizes overt sexism to equate Lakshmi with the burger. Even though the commercial implies that Lakshmi, like the burger, is "not just a piece of meat," as is also the case at the end of Burger King's "Manthem" commercial, both woman and burger are positioned as objects for male consumption; both are, in fact, very much "just" pieces of meat. Furthermore, the burger's status as "Western" constitutes a dual meaning: Hardee's certainly means for the burger's barbeque sauce to evoke the cuisine of the western United States, but "Western" functions more broadly in this sense to situate the Western (American), first world, meat-based, and masculinized diet as superior to Indian, third world, and feminized vegetarianism.

These commercials play on men's insecurities about their masculinity and about perceived threats to the stability of white Western patriarchy in the face of the empowerment of women, immigrants, and minorities. But for there to be an actual threat, these groups would have to have made significant inroads into the institutions traditionally only accessed through white male privilege. Such circumstances simply are not the case. In a 2010 *Washington Post* editorial, Jessica Valenti blames "enlightened sexism" for reinforcing women's second-class status in the United States while focusing on injustices against women that are occurring elsewhere in the world—in Sudan and Darfur, for example. She claims, "We're suffering under the mass delusion that women in America have achieved equality." She also notes that "more than 1,000 women were killed by their partners in 2005, and of all the women murdered in the United States, about a third are killed by a husband or boyfriend." Furthermore, "women hold 17 percent of the seats in Congress; abortion is legal, but more than 85 percent of counties in the United States have no provider; women work outside the home, but they make about 76 cents to a man's dollar and make up the majority of Americans living in poverty."

More recently, Sabrina Tavernise's September 20, 2012, *New York Times* article, "Life Spans Shrink for Least-Educated Whites in the U.S.," notes that while the most educated U.S. citizens are experiencing increases in life expectancy, a new study notes a precipitous drop in life expectancy for adult white U.S. citizens who do not hold a high school diploma, with "the steepest declines . . . for white women without a high school diploma, who lost five years of life between 1990 and 2008." As a result, international life expectancy rankings show some startling statistics: "In 2010, American women fell to 41st place, down from 14th place in 1985, in the United Nations rankings," and according to the Human Mortality Database, "among developed countries, American women sank from the middle of the pack in 1970 to last place in 2010." During a period of profound social change in the United States, characterized in large part by soaring rates of childbirth to single mothers and the legal codification of limitations on women's access to affordable and safe reproductive health care, it is little wonder that less educated (and, therefore, less affluent) women are not faring well, but what is more frightening is the reality that instead of making social, political, and economic advances, U.S. women appear to be going backward.[10]

According to Stephanie Coontz, despite a slew of books like Hanna Rosin's 2012 *The End of Men and the Rise of Women* that proclaim that U.S. women's gains in socioeconomic status have resulted in men's decline and regression into a kind of perpetual adolescence, "men still control the most important industries, especially technology, occupy most of the positions on the lists of the richest Americans, and continue to make more money than women who have similar skills and education." Coontz notes that while women have

made gains in certain aspects of their lives over the course of several decades, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s, when job segregation by gender decreased, in the last fifteen years, "in many arenas the progress of women has actually stalled." Coontz notes some of the ways that apparent gains in women's financial and social status are exaggerated and mask larger inequities. For example, while women's earnings have been rising for decades, "women's wages started from a much lower base, artificially held down by discrimination"; women's average earnings remain lower than men's—and women are still more likely than men to be poor. Since losing their jobs during our country's most recent recession, men have regained jobs at a higher rate than women, and "among never-married, childless 22- to 30-year-old metropolitan-area workers with the same educational credentials, males out-earn females in every category."[11]

Coontz's article also notes that the mythology surrounding women's supposed empowerment and men's supposed disempowerment functions to keep anyone from moving forward with regard to real gender equity. For men, an "overinvestment in their gender identity instead of their individual personhood" functions to keep men out of certain lines of work typically associated with women (which, in turn, keeps down salaries in such areas as social work, dental hygiene, and primary school education). But Coontz does articulate the way that men's access to unqualified patriarchal privilege has been curtailed to some extent; she notes, for example, that marital rape, once considered an oxymoron, is now a criminal act and that women's increasing access to financial independence affords them the opportunity to get out of problematic and abusive relationships.[12] Coontz notes that men, as a result of these circumstances, are pushing up against real limits "externally enforced as well as self-imposed—strikingly similar to the ones Betty Friedan set out to combat in 1963, when she identified a 'feminine mystique' that constrained women's self-image and options."

This "gender mystique" works to enforce outdated notions of masculinity and encourages men to adopt retrograde notions of manliness akin to those depicted and reinforced by the Burger King "Manthem" commercial. Instead of embracing a sociohistorical moment during which a measure of real gender equality could be realized, "the masculine mystique encourages men to neglect their own self-improvement on the assumption that sooner or later their 'manliness' will be rewarded." Furthermore, "just as the feminine mystique exposed girls to ridicule and harassment if they excelled at 'unladylike' activities like math or sports, the masculine mystique leads to bullying and ostracism of boys who engage in 'girlie' activities" like caring for children, studying, or, as should be apparent from the analysis of the advertisements above, eating a plant-based diet. In a moment of such heightened awareness of the precarious nature of masculinity, men who choose to be vegan must

therefore negotiate a discursive space in which that decision either calls into question their masculinity or attempts to reconceptualize veganism as an alternative ultramasculine choice.

A Politics of Resistance? Hegemonic Hegan Masculinity

Despite the fact that a large body of work about men, meat, and gender exists, according to Jemál Nath, "the experience of vegetarian men who reject the social and cultural norm of eating animals is harder to discern" (261) and for men, "choosing to eat a plant-based diet is . . . transgressing dominant cultural and gastronomic norms of Western society and all of the meat-eating values invested in those norms" (263). In 2007 Nath studied a group of Australian men (described in his 2010 article "Gendered Fare? A Qualitative Investigation of Alternative Food and Masculinities") and noted the pressure that nonvegetarian and nonvegan men place upon men who eschew meat eating, particularly in the homosocial and quintessentially masculine setting of the barbeque. The barbeque is archetypal in its significance with regard to homosocial male bonding in Australia, so much so that British archaeologist Mark Horton argued that "gender demarcation at the barbeque is grounded in evolution" (Nath 267), and he cited questionable fossil evidence to prove it.[13] Nonetheless, the twenty-five men in Nath's study who did not eat meat noted that "criticism and comments expressing fault, bewilderment or severe disapproval, are the principal tools non-vegetarian men use to ensure observance of, or obedience to, the established standard of consuming meat and animal products" (266). Finally, Nath notes that given such negative attitudes from their fellow men "towards vegetarian and vegan nutritional careers, an improvement in men's health by virtue of a reduction in dietary saturated animal fats and an increase in fruit and vegetable consumption might be difficult to achieve" (275).

Another 2007 study, by Annie Potts and Jovian Parry (see their 2010 article, "Vegan Sexuality: Challenging Heteronormative Masculinity through Meat-Free Sex") looked at the emergence of "a new 'sexual preference' and a new controversy [that subsequently] appeared in the global media-scape and on the internet: 'vegansexuality'" (53), which surfaced after a 2006 nationwide New Zealand study that looked at the perspectives of vegetarian and vegan consumers in that country. Several vegetarian female respondents—only one of whom identified as vegan—noted that they engaged in sexual and long-term relationships only with others who likewise abstained from meat and animal products. Potts and Parry note that in subsequent news stories, the term "vegansexual" was coined to define this phenomenon and that the global coverage of it "was, predictably, highly sensationalized" (55). While

the backlash that ensued was aimed at women who would dare to express this new sexual orientation—and Potts and Parry read vegansexuality in Foucauldian terms, noting its creation "through various machinations of power and resilience, discourse and confession" (55)—the most vitriolic contempt for vegansexuality came from omnivorous heterosexual men (57).

Unsurprisingly, the authors note as well that, given the links between meat and heterosexual masculinity, "the 'real' manliness (and sexuality) of vegetarian and vegan men typically comes under scrutiny by men who eat meat" (Potts and Parry 58). The various criticisms from this group aimed at women who express this orientation include the assertion that both veganism and sex with only vegan men constitutes a form of self-imposed abstinence by women who really prefer meat eaters—and meat—"but deny their 'true' desires," or as dietary and sexual dysfunction, a deficiency, and/or a form of discrimination against men who eat meat (64). While the target for hostility in this case is obviously women, the agents of that hostility are men who both are heterosexual and eat meat, the same group that is most threatened by their fellow men's nonnormative, vegetarian or vegan dietary practice.

Likewise, in the United States and Britain, research has shown a strong perceptional link between the consumption of muscle meat (like steak) and masculinity, and men who choose not to eat red meat are viewed as weak.[14] In this discourse about meat and masculinity, which consistently asserts that while vegetarians are viewed as more virtuous than their omnivorous counterparts, they are also perceived as less masculine, men who choose to be vegan face immense social pressure to acquiesce and eat meat, or they risk experiencing ridicule, judgment, and ostracism by their fellow men.[15] While Nath discovered that some non-meat-eating men find it empowering to subvert the dominant dietary norm (274)—and one could argue, after all, that to be male and refuse to eat meat is one of the bravest things a man can do, given the societal pressure to do otherwise—the pressure to render veganism as appropriately masculine has generated a counterdiscourse of "heganism," or male veganism. "Hegan" was a term coined in a 2010 article in the *Boston Globe* that featured "the new face of veganism: men in their 40s and 50s embracing a restrictive lifestyle to look better, rectify a gluttonous past, or cheat death. They are hegans. They are healthy. And they are here to stay" (Pierce). The article, which again, as so much else, employs the rhetoric of "restriction," focuses initially on Joe McCain, a police detective who claims that for the majority of his life he "ate like an American" prior to becoming vegan in his midforties. In its assertion of veganism as a masculine choice made by a real man—a police detective—McCain's statement about eating "like an American" prior to becoming vegan again situates veganism in a post-9/11 world as something beyond the realm of the American diet. Such positioning should invite dietary influences from other cultures to shape the hegan ethos, even

if that ethos is positioned as one of abstinence. The article also features such manly hegans and former hegans as Atlanta Falcons tight end Tony Gonzalez and firefighter and triathlete Rip Esselstyn.

Similarly, David Quick's 2011 article, "Rise of the 'Hegans'" in the *Charleston Post and Courier*, followed suit, embellishing on hegans' original denotation of middle-aged male veganism to increase the term's macho factor: "While the stereotypical male vegan . . . has been seen as the bearded, Birkenstock-wearing, anemic hippie, some high-profile alpha males have converted to a diet that eschews animal meat and even any animal byproducts such as milk, cheese and eggs." Such an assertion establishes a problematic dualism that marks a divide between the proposed vegan stereotype, "anemic hippie" male vegans who are clearly considered weak, and a new variety of vegan, "alpha males" whose masculine strength remains intact despite their decision to ascribe to a diet outside the norm. Of significance in terms of this hegan-as-alpha-male alignment is the reality that these power males became vegan *after* establishing their power and prowess while they were eating meat; implicit within both this article and the *Boston Globe* piece that preceded it is the idea that for men who have established themselves as real *American* men—by eating meat and becoming unhealthy as a result—and have made their mark on the world as meat eaters, the choice to be vegan might be an appropriate second act, a tolerated position given their completion of such rites of passage as heart disease, obesity, and high cholesterol. The need to align "heganism" with physical strength and such so-called alpha male characteristics as political and financial prowess points to both the increased visibility of male vegans and the ways that that dietary choice is now being co-opted by the media as a form of appropriate masculinity, even if only for certain exceptional men.

While it is possible to read "hegan" as a humorous blend of "he" and "vegan," the mere creation of a term that differentiates certain male vegans from others and, more problematically, from their female counterparts further enforces the notion that veganism is a feminine endeavor and that men's choice to undertake such a dietary option must engender a masculine empowerment that allows that choice to be different from veganism as practiced by women or by certain other men—Birkenstock-wearing anemic hippies. Hegans, therefore, are something other than merely vegan; they are so ultramasculine as to be able to be vegan and to make that dietary choice manly as well. A profile of some alpha-male power vegans appeared in a 2010 *Businessweek* article that touts veganism as the newest way for business moguls to "distinguish themselves from the rest of us." In the context of this article, "The Rise of the Power Vegans," heganism is cast as an exclusive club attainable and affordable only to those powerful and rich enough to even know it exists: "Only one percent of the U.S. population is vegan, partly because

veganism isn't cheap: The cost comes from the value of specialty products made by specialty companies with cloying names (tofurkey, anyone?). Vegans also have to be powerful enough to even know what veganism is." The article features none other than Ingrid Newkirk, founder of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, endorsing Las Vegas mogul Steve Wynn's decision to become vegan. Other featured power players who have given up animal products include such heavy hitters as former president Bill Clinton and Bill Ford, Ford executive chairman of the board, as well as Twitter cofounder Biz Stone and heavyweight fighter Mike Tyson. The concept of power veganism works to normalize a dietary choice that would have seemed outrageous for these men only a decade earlier—as the article proclaims, "being a vegan then was so weird that pundits listed it as a reason Dennis Kucinich couldn't be the Democratic Presidential nominee." Kucinich, who notes in the piece that during his 2004 presidential bid people were not sure if "vegan" constituted a third political party or an ethnic group, is discussed not as a power vegan but rather as a man who chose a vegan diet to impress a woman—his current wife, Elizabeth—who was vegan. Kucinich says, "This was a kind of courtship strategy." It is worth noting that in none of these instances is veganism presented in the context of an ethical choice.

Perhaps no better example of the hegan discourse exists than the coverage of Bill Clinton's veganism, a dietary position markedly at odds with his wife's earlier omnivorous assertion of hunting prowess during her bid for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2008 and markedly at odds with the former president's own dietary endeavors while he was in office. In "The Comeback Vegan," Maureen Dowd's razor-sharp critique of Obama's seemingly unlikely decision to allow Bill Clinton to stump for him at the 2012 Democratic National Convention, Dowd notes that the relationship between the two is "not a bromance," like Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan, but "a transaction": "And what does the Big Dog get? Resurrection, redemption, relevance, a reflected patina of Obama integrity and fidelity; the chance to outshine the upstart who outmaneuvered his wife and, by extension, him in 2008. And a possible ticket back to the Oval Office, this time as the First Man, a vegan gnawing on Michelle's vegetable garden." Clinton's decision to become vegan was predicated on family and personal history of heart disease and after having two heart procedures. Clinton, a man famous while he was in office for his appetite—for both food and women—"now considers himself a vegan," according to David S. Martin's CNN article on Clinton's dietary journey. For Clinton, the dietary shift was about weight loss and about stopping the progression of heart disease; his latest goal, according to Martin, is "getting his weight down to 185, what he weighed when he was 13 years old." If Joan Allen's Laine Hanson is the poster girl for all things feminist, her veganism, even though her reasons for it are never discussed in the context of *The Contender*, is

at least fictionally aligned with a political stance that positions her diet as part and parcel of her ethical, liberal, and feminist position. Clinton, conversely, is the poster boy for all things heteronormatively masculine—a womanizer who was impeached for lying about his own illicit sexual encounter with a White House intern, a rabid carnivore who ascribed to the explicit narrative of Burger King's "Manthem" and consumed fast-food burgers by the wagonload during his first term in office, and a fraternity boy alpha male who held the highest office in the United States for two terms.[16]

Because veganism is so negatively connoted for men, the ultramasculine vegan or hegan identity championed in mainstream media is perhaps unsurprising; we are in a cultural moment during which we are negotiating exactly what it means for men to eschew eating animals and animal products, and our sociocultural inability to articulate what it might mean for men to make such dietary choices based on ethics (and not for health reasons or reasons based on power and elitism) underscores—again—the invisibility of animals and animal rights in much of the codified analysis behind why people, male and female, choose to be vegan. In this space, the online men's magazine the *Discerning Brute* provides what is possibly the best balance between a normative understanding of masculine identity and the ethics behind why some men choose a vegan lifestyle. Touted as "fashion, food and etiquette for the ethically handsome man," the September 30, 2012, issue of the magazine features a recipe for "bloody beet chili" and a story about the beet burger sold by Brooklyn purveyor Olive & Chickpea. Both items look, well, bloody and meaty, an obvious lure for men who associate bloody meat with masculinity. But in addition to these stories and a piece about vegan body builder Jim Morris (shown in a 1970s era photo with, among others, Arnold Schwarzenegger), who became vegan at age fifty and now, at age seventy-seven, looks like a tank, the publication also features one story about ducks rescued from an animal hoarder and another called "The Vegan Fallacy" (in which the word "dude" is used repeatedly) about the misconception that all things vegan are actually healthful.

In the wake of a supposed crisis of masculinity in the United States, men find themselves increasingly pressured to eat bloody red meat as a way of reasserting and reestablishing their presumably lost positions of power and influence. Not to do so is to be penalized, to be considered weak and/or effeminate, and to be ostracized. In print, on television, and in film, a mythology of working-class American male solidarity is performed over the act of eating hamburgers, steaks, and hot dogs, and men are shown actively rebelling against women, refinement, and non-Western dietary choices—a rebellion that maintains a tacit and underlying post-9/11 xenophobia with regard to other cultures. In the context of such forward-thinking narratives of the emergent masculinities of heganism and power veganism, as is the case with

the previously discussed studies that seek to align cruelty-free diets with eating disorders in women, the links between animal welfare and liberation that tend to underscore and contribute mightily to decisions to become vegan are omitted from the equation with regard to men as well; in fact, male veganism only seems acceptable if it is *not* linked to animal welfare. In an affront to the idea that veganism in men marks weakness and effeminacy, male veganism is instead rendered as an elite club accessible only to the wealthy and powerful and as a marker of exceptional masculinity available only to some ultramasculine alpha-male contingent—and it is generally the last option available to men who heretofore have eaten "like Americans" only to discover later in life that that dietary choice has placed them in the way of extreme harm. In the United States, we are left without many positive representations of male veganism as predicated upon an animal-liberation or animal-rights ethic, but as male veganism gains visibility, such a discourse is necessarily emergent, forming somewhere in the liminal spaces between a rhetoric of "anemic hippie" and "alpha male."

CHAPTER 6

The Celebrity Vegan Project

Pamela, Mac, Mike, Ellen, and Oprah

Joshua Gamson, in his 1994 study *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America*, asks this question: "Is it possible to bypass work, action, achievement, and talent and head straight for notoriety?" (2). With regard to the status of contemporary celebrity in the United States, a place where reality show stars garner media coverage and people like Paris Hilton and Kim Kardashian are celebrities, famous in a circularly logistical way for no apparent reason other than the fact that they are famous, the answer to Gamson's question is unequivocally yes. As evidence of this reality, in *Understanding Celebrity Today* (2004), Graeme Turner posits that celebrities (like Hilton and Kardashian, for example) "may claim no special achievements other than the attraction of public attention" (3) and that contemporary manifestations of celebrity status point to a worrying shift "towards a culture that privileges the momentary, the visual and the sensational over the enduring, the written, and the rational" (4). The culmination of this shift is an historical and social moment when the constant visibility and scrutiny of celebrities is unprecedented and during which, as P. David Marshall notes in *Celebrity Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture* (2004), the celebrity "is universally individualized, for the star is the representation of the potential of the individual" (17).

Marshall claims that "the distinctive quality of the celebrity is derived from its emergence from the twinned discourses of modernity: democracy and capitalism" (4). Because our current construction of celebrity is so completely produced and sustained by consumer capitalism, celebrities, by their very natures, are perpetual salespeople who establish and maintain their positions by presenting the public with an endless variety of products aimed at allowing for greater access to an ever-evolving interpretation of the "American dream." In *Stargazing: Celebrity, Fame, and Social Interaction* (2011), Kerry O. Ferris and Scott R. Harris claim that "when citizens give themselves up to the easy pleasures of capitalism (like mass media, consumerism, and celebrity), they are more readily controlled by tyrants. . . . So, from the perspective of scholars, fans and consumers have been duped by capitalism into fancying something worthless and unhealthy" (6). This chapter examines the increased visibility and scrutiny of celebrity vegans particularly in the second decade of the twenty-first century and the way that in the hands of celebrity vegans, vegan-

ism circulates as a product within the democratic capitalist matrix in ways that complicate both its ethical and its health-based imperatives. This chapter also examines the ways that veganism impacts celebrity in the United States and the ways that a celebrity's status as vegan factors into the other aspects that constitute highly public identity politics that are inherently enmeshed with fame. Furthermore, when veganism is presented in the context of fame, it often becomes both a product and an ideal; for example, veganism functions as a diet marketed as a way to lose weight and look like a specific vegan celebrity or as a dietary aphrodisiac, promoted for its potential to increase sex drive and stamina.

In the case of celebrities who are publicly vegan, their veganism functions as a manifestation of individual (noncelebrity) potential to embody veganism and also as a publicly scrutinized and debated identity category alternately lauded as healthful and derided as elitist and illegitimate, depending on the reasons for why the celebrity in question has chosen to be vegan. Furthermore, much of the discourse generated by vegan celebrity status functions to situate veganism within mainstream culture, thereby divorcing it, for the most part, from its predominant ideological investment in animal advocacy and its political function as a form of social and cultural protest. In fact, I would argue that perhaps in part because of the negative connotations associated with veganism post-9/11, there has been a media campaign staged by vegans and nonvegans alike to divorce contemporary veganism from its most foundational import and reconstitute it as something decidedly other—a diet—neutralized of its "fringe" focus on animals. Even such a once-radical organization as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals has worked to mainstream veganism; Ingrid Newkirk "admits that PETA has chosen the path of working within the system to achieve its goal of exposing the public to animal advocacy" (Deckha 54).

In fact, it may be assumed that "one of the reasons that PETA has become the organizational face of animal advocacy for the public is due to its celebrity endorsements" (Deckha 37). In the context of the preceding chapters, which examine the way that veganism and vegan identity are constituted, gendered, and conscripted within mainstream media, I am particularly interested in examining the ways that fame complicates, highlights, and—most importantly—challenges or reinforces the current discourse of veganism as it has been revealed in the preceding parts of this study. For example, if vampires on *True Blood* "mainstream" by being vegan—a position that relegates vegan humans (like Amy Burley) to the fringe—such action seems prescient in terms of the ways that in the years since *True Blood* premiered on HBO, veganism has found "mainstream" ground through celebrity advocacy, even from vegan celebrities who play vampires, like *True Blood*'s Kristin Bauer van Straten (who plays Pam DeBeaufort) and *Twilight*'s Ashley Greene (who plays Alice Cullen).

If, as I discussed in chapter 4, noncelebrity women are rendered disordered, unhealthy, and malevolent for being vegan, celebrity vegan women sell veganism as a great way to lose weight. And if noncelebrity vegan men are emasculated weaklings, as I examined in chapter 5, the celebrity response is a resounding exaltation of the male vegan athlete, a being virile, manly, and, in many cases, violent. In this chapter, I look at interviews with and commentary about famous vegans, as well as the media discourse generated by their veganism in terms of its construction of celebrity bodily personae; that is, because celebrity (particularly in the United States) is defined and determined in very large part by the physical attributes, perceived flaws, and cosmetic modifications of those who are famous, this chapter provides an overview of celebrity vegans as both physically constituted by veganism and performing the vegan body in ways that both reinforce and disrupt other stereotypical perceptions of veganism discussed throughout this study. Furthermore, because the celebrity body is so highly scrutinized in terms of its exterior physical manifestation, celebrity bodies constitute a never-ending and self-conscious project that consistently risks being deemed inappropriate (too old, too thin, too fat), and veganism functions to increase the precarious and unstable nature of the celebrity body, particularly as a celebrity's status as vegan is consistently held up to scrutiny and often deemed—by vegans and nonvegans alike—to fall short of some eternally shifting idealized standard of veganism. For example, is Vegas casino mogul Steve Wynn *vegan enough* if in addition to offering vegan menus, his resort restaurants continue to serve meat? Is Kathy Freston *appropriately vegan* if she encourages Oprah Winfrey's staffers to eat prepackaged meat substitutes during their week-long vegan cleanse? And is Woody Harrelson *too vegan* in his maintenance of a strict raw food diet?

After providing a brief overview of celebrity vegans, I will focus on the ways that celebrities utilize veganism to promote specific political and personal agendas, as well as the ways that their veganism becomes—with or without their consent—a complex marketing tool for provegan media and organizations (like PETA). While there are numerous celebrities upon whom such a chapter could focus, I will pay particular attention to vegan actor and model Pamela Anderson's status as highly sexualized spokesperson for PETA; the social and racial circumstances that generate wildly different narratives of veganism for former heavyweight fighter Mike Tyson and mixed martial artist Mac Danzig; and the ways that talk-show personalities Ellen DeGeneres and Oprah Winfrey have influenced the cultural discourse of veganism, DeGeneres through an animal welfare position that is complicated by her status as spokesperson for Cover Girl, and Winfrey by mainstreaming and neutralizing the political nature of veganism as she took her staff through a week-long vegan "cleanse" in 2012. Because, as I noted in the first chapter of this study, the vegan identity is most often constituted within contemporary U.S. dis-

course as liberal, white, and privileged, this chapter also seeks to trouble that presentation by looking at the ways that the bodies of certain celebrity vegans (and therefore vegans who are not celebrities) either enforce or do not factor into our typical understanding of a homogeneous notion of vegan identity.

On the one hand, celebrity status may be the greatest tool advocates for veganism have at their disposal to disrupt a homogenizing and often negatively connoted notion of what it means to be vegan, but on the other, such advocacy can also work against such disruption by rendering vegan bodies—even those of celebrities—as disordered and the decision to be vegan as an uninformed or unintelligent fad. And because celebrities, like anyone else, may be vegan at one point only to renounce that stance at another, investment in the maintenance of the narrative of a celebrity's status as vegan as a means of furthering veganism as a "movement" is a tenuous and incredibly risky business. In many cases, long-term celebrity veganism (like long-term celebrity marriage) is rendered an impossibility, a commitment too difficult to maintain in the face of constant temptation. Joel Luks notes in "When Vegan Celebs Disappoint: From Angelina Jolie's Betrayal to Carrie Underwood's Closet Convictions," "celebrities do have the ability to reach millions, but many do not distinguish that they are not the definitive authority on subjects. They are carrying someone else's message."

As this statement makes clear, celebrity actions are invested with meaning in large part because the broader cultural discourse surrounding those actions, not the celebrity herself or himself, generates the meaning: the message that is conveyed with regard to whether or not a celebrity is vegan is more often than not "someone else's message"; the celebrity's bodily performance of veganism (or of not embodying veganism) serves to further our cultural narrative about what constitutes vegan identity politics, whether or not the celebrity in question wishes to participate in that narrative or in those politics. Celebrity bodies and actions, along with the discourse that constitutes them, function collectively as texts, readable and open to interpretation, and texts from which the author—the actual celebrity under scrutiny—is often divorced. The cultural narratives that constitute celebrity status are in large part beyond the control of those about whom they are told; narratives of celebrity veganism are no exception.

A 2011 *Huffington Post* article by Jocelyn Noveck titled "Veganism Has Some Stylish New Spokespeople: Celebs" discusses the number of famous vegans one might encounter while dining at Manhattan's raw vegan restaurant Pure Food and Wine:

> Call them the big-time vegans: The celebrity standard-bearers for a vegan lifestyle aren't just wispy young actresses. They include talk-show host

> Ellen DeGeneres, along with wife Portia de Rossi. (Or Oprah Winfrey, who isn't vegan but led her staff on a . . . vegan cleanse.) Or men like Ozzy Osbourne and Russell Brand, who in recent weeks both declared themselves vegans. Athletes like Carl Lewis and Mike Tyson. Even NFL player Tony Gonzalez, tight end for the Atlanta Falcons and 245-plus pounds, attributes his longevity to a largely vegan diet.

The article discusses the way that such spokespeople have increased the visibility of veganism in American culture, noting that celebrity vegan advocates have raised awareness about veganism for average Americans. It further notes that data collected by the nonprofit education and advocacy Vegetarian Resource Group indicate that there has been a pronounced increase in veganism over the past decade; polls indicate that 5 percent of Americans are vegetarian and that "half of these vegetarians are also vegan, meaning they don't eat dairy or eggs, either. . . . In addition, the proportion of vegans to vegetarians seems to be going up, says Charles Stahler, co-director of the group" (Noveck).

Tal Ronnen, the vegan chef who oversaw Oprah Winfrey's 2008 vegan cleanse and collaborated with mogul Steve Wynn to create vegan menus for his Las Vegas hotels, attributes the increase in veganism within mainstream culture to a shift in perception about what constitutes a vegan diet and what personality attributes are characteristic of vegans. He notes that "it's no longer seen as a diet of hummus and alfalfa sprouts on some really dry healthy bread," and "it's not hippies preaching peace and love. Now, you have a crossover of mainstream business people and good-looking celebrities" (qtd. in Noveck)—like Steve Wynn, for example, and Brad Pitt (who may or may not be vegan). In the article's distinguishing of "big-time" and "good-looking" vegans from the rest of us—and from "wispy young actresses"—veganism is constituted as a serious endeavor undertaken by a diverse variety of somehow legitimate celebrities. In fact, it is their embodiedness that makes them idealized mirrors of our own individual potential: these folks are not ethereal "wisps"; they are established athletes, moguls, and actors, many of whom (such comments tacitly imply) are corporeal (not ethereal "wisps"), middle-aged or older (not "young"), and male (not "actresses"). They are, therefore, more representative of the aspirations of other noncelebrity men, particularly those who do or wish to embody power and success.

Such challenges to the stereotypes associated with vegan identity and vegan diet over the past decade could certainly be beneficial if the perceptual shift furthers acceptance and adoption of veganism within mainstream culture, but there is also the potential for the media's focus on celebrity vegans to reduce veganism to a mere fad, particularly when celebrity vegans stop being vegan. A Google search for "famous vegans" pulls up numerous pages with various lists of people who are or have been vegan and are considered famous

for various reasons, including their work as actors, politicians, writers, athletes, or artists. HappyCow maintains a list that is constantly updated and corrected to reflect the vegetarian and vegan status of hundreds of people; Vegan Wolf has a list that is divided into various categories, and *Wikipedia* maintains a "list of vegans" page. Based on the *Wikipedia* page and a list at Soystache.com, a site that also includes a list of "not-so-famous vegetarians" that allows any vegetarian or vegan to join, as of November 6, 2012, Google's top hits for famous vegans were Alicia Silverstone, Ellen DeGeneres, Casey Affleck, Bryan Adams, Fiona Apple, Joaquin Phoenix, Dennis Kucinich, Woody Harrelson, and Natalie Portman.

Socialite Life lists "15 of the hottest vegan celebrities," including Olivia Wilde, Jessica Chastain, Russell Brand, and Brad Pitt, and PETA annually recognizes what it considers the sexiest vegetarians of the year; for 2012, winners in both the male and female categories were vegan, Woody Harrelson and Jessica Chastain, and for 2013, the winner was Kristen Bell, a former vegan who became vegetarian when she was breastfeeding.[1] Clearly, celebrities raise the profile of veganism, so it is little wonder that PETA and other animal-advocacy organizations flaunt vegan celebrities in the service of their various agendas. And as an added selling point in the marketing of veganism to the masses, celebrity vegan bodies—particularly female bodies—are invoked as a means of promoting weight loss. For example, an article in *Shape*, which maintains that the "hottest new celebrity diet" is veganism, discusses such vegan and former vegan celebrities as Ginnifer Goodwin, who notes that "your taste buds will awaken, and you can eat more without gaining weight," and Alanis Morissette, who became vegan and subsequently "lost 20 pounds and participated in several long-distance runs, which include the NYC marathon." But regardless of the reasons for the media's focus on celebrity veganism, famous vegans occupy a precarious space that invites speculation, praise, criticism, and condemnation in ways that draw heightened attention to their bodies in terms of their race, sex appeal, weight, strength, and willpower.

Pamela Anderson: PETA's Sex(ist) Appeal

In 2010 People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals launched an advertising campaign featuring former *Baywatch* star, model, plastic surgery devotee, and vegan Pamela Anderson. The ad features Anderson in a bikini, her body divided up and labeled as cuts of meat, and the ad's tagline reads, "All animals have the same parts. Have a heart. Go vegetarian." Anderson is perhaps more famous for her various breast augmentation surgeries and sex tape with Mötley Crüe drummer and former husband, Tommy Lee, than for any other aspect of her career and professional life, with the exception of her activism on the

part of animals and her role as spokesperson for PETA. While the ad had no trouble being released in the United States, it was banned in Anderson's home country of Canada for being sexist, much to Anderson's shock and dismay. Of her decision to appear in the ad, Anderson notes that "the butcher diagram is the perfect thing to parody, because it allows you to use your own body as a protest tool" (qtd. in Jones).[2] But in an article about the ad, PETA's senior vice president, Dan Mathews, refers to Anderson as PETA's "weapon of mass distraction" (qtd. in Jones), a designation that would seem to imply that in its focus on Anderson's body, the ad distracts from, rather than drives home, any real ethical vegetarian message.

PETA's utilization of scantily clad celebrity women—who are more often than not celebrities because of their bodies—in ad campaigns aimed at raising awareness about the ways that animals suffer had been the subject of controversy prior to the Anderson ad; for example, PETA's "I'd Rather Go Naked Than Wear Fur" ad campaign, which was launched in 1991, has featured numerous naked celebrity women asserting their disdain for the fur industry and has been criticized for its exploitation of one kind of body—women's—in the service of advocating for, *not* exploiting, another. Further, PETA's "Lettuce Ladies" ad campaign features famous women—and Anderson is prominent in this campaign as well—and amateur models clad only in lettuce-leaf bikinis. The campaign's website contains such headlines as "a vegan diet gives you a lean, sexy body," "eating meat causes impotence" (the text of which appears next to a flaccid-looking zucchini), and "vegans make better lovers."

Pamela Anderson's advertisement for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA).

While Wendy Atkins-Sayre claims that "one way that PETA's advertisements invite viewers to reassess animal identity is through the emphasis of shared emotions between humans and non-human animals" (316), the Anderson ad focuses on shared body parts, perhaps to "show humans and animals blended together, to make it harder to distinguish human experiences from animal experiences (and vice versa)" (320). But rather than conflate animal and human bodies (and emotions), the Anderson ad situates a sexualized human body in lieu of a butchered animal corpse. As Sarah E. Brown notes, "Using naked women to sell veganism may seem to be

acceptable as long as the ends are ethical consumption, but years of fighting oppression have taught us that this isn't the case. Oppression in any form leads to oppression in other forms—period. What's wrong with using sex appeal for selling an ethical lifestyle or 'good cause'? A lot." Anderson's body, made famous by *Baywatch* and her various appearances in *Playboy*, altered by surgery, and ultimately utilized—both by PETA and by Anderson herself—as a tool of protest, is hypersexualized and unreal, a modified and stylized entity shaped by the U.S. culture that, despite her status as Canadian, created the phenomenon that is Anderson. That Anderson is an ethical vegan and a tireless crusader for animal rights complicates her persona as *merely* a body, particularly as that persona functions as PETA's commodity, challenging our common conceptions about what constitutes a so-called blonde bombshell (a woman appreciated only for her body) even as the press commends her only for her body; her vegan diet is praised for the ways that it keeps her "sexy and slim" (Davis). In her service as PETA's "spokesbody," Anderson's ethic is compromised by her willingness to objectify her body even as her body simultaneously functions as the tool for the promotion of that ethic.

Celebrities like Anderson who choose to be publicly vegan face intensified scrutiny in terms of the space that their already scrutinized bodies occupy, particularly when they are, as Anderson is, known primarily for their bodies. I tend to agree with the assessment that PETA's unselfconscious displacement of animal bodies by women's bodies, ostensibly in the service of promoting and advocating on behalf of animals, works more to exploit women than to liberate animals; in fact, PETA's outright refusal of the ecofeminist perspective that would acknowledge a link between various kinds of oppressions, I would argue, is antithetical and counterproductive to its presumed mission, as such tactics simply draw attention to highly sexualized, often cosmetically altered women's bodies and not to the plight of animals.[3] If such ads are in the nature of parody, as Anderson indicates is the case with regard to her butcher diagram ad, the effect is lost in the removal of the animal body from the equation. As I have already mentioned, Carol J. Adams notes, "Through butchering, animals become absent referents. Animals in name and body are made absent *as animals* for meat to exist" (*Sexual Politics* 40), and situating a sexualized image of a woman in place of the butchered animal erases both the animal and the violent act of butchering while rendering the woman a *willing* consumable object. The celebrity woman's body may be positioned in place of the animal body, but the focus is shifted from the disgust that might be elicited from a visual rendering of a butchered animal corpse to titillation in response to the highly sexualized image of a scantily clad woman in a seductive pose.

In response to PETA's 2012 Super Bowl ad, which NBC banned for, among other things, its depiction of women doing such things as licking various

vegetables and even one woman "screwing herself with broccoli" ("NBC's Sexually-Explicit Super Bowl"), Kelsey Wallace quips in a post for *Bitch* magazine that even PETA's animal welfare agenda has become absent as a result of its focus on women's bodies: "Look PETA, WE GET IT. You want us to associate vegetables with HOT SEX. You'd rather get attention than stay true to your mission (which I can barely find on your website for all the lingerie, but I think it's animal-related). Fine. These publicity stunts are getting a little desperate though. Can't you just shout BOOBS!!! next time and stop pretending it has anything to do with the ethical treatment of, well, anyone?" The Internet is awash with just such commentary about the apparent misogyny of PETA's various marketing ploys—which is part of the point of PETA's tactics: all press, whether laudatory or condemnatory, is good press. If it raises awareness about the treatment of animals, then the ends have justified the means, particularly as PETA has worked to become a more mainstream movement "more concerned with cultural changes such as identity issues than with economic or political goals" (Atkins-Sayre 310). I would argue, however, that such ad campaigns exploit women's bodies in ways that merely distract (as Dan Mathews has already noted with regard to Anderson) from the issues that they purport to champion.

Feminists for Animal Rights (FAR), an ecofeminist organization cofounded by Marti Kheel in 1982, was very active in protesting, both in its semiannual newsletter and in letters to the editor of major publications, PETA's utilization of female nudity in the service of its "I'd Rather Go Naked Than Wear Fur" campaign. In the 1994–95 newsletter, Cathleen and Colleen McGuire write that while they respect and appreciate the work that PETA has done on behalf of animals, they are frustrated by Ingrid Newkirk's "neo-Victorian feminist" charge that activists who argue against oppressive images of women in the media feel that all depictions of female nudity are categorically wrong. They note, "We do *not* have a 'blanket condemnation of female nudity.' What we do have is a developed understanding of when certain portrayals of nudity perpetuate the objectification and debasement of women" (1). In their analysis, the McGuire sisters note that "PETA is replicating the dominant culture's usage of a *particular* depiction of women's bodies to convey their point" (9), and that depiction reinforces heterosexist norms about female sexuality. In the same issue, Carol Adams, through a careful explication of the epistemological processes through which "a subject knows her or himself through objectifying others" (1), asserts that "the problem is not that PETA fails to recognize the interconnection of treatment of animals and treatment of women." Rather, "the problem is that unless they understand male sexual violence and how it is that subjectification takes place under patriarchy, they won't truly understand violence against animals" ("PETA" 8).

Furthermore, while PETA has featured male celebrities of different races—including basketball star Dennis Rodman and rapper Waka Flocka Flame—in its "Ink Not Mink" campaign, the characteristics that constitute sexiness in the context of its ad campaigns that feature women, with few exceptions, are monochromatic and predictable. The women featured in PETA's various ad campaigns are almost without exception white, buxom (often as a result of breast implants), and, aside from their obvious curves, thin. In this sense, PETA's construction of the sexy celebrity vegan body reinforces what for most people constitutes an unrealistic and even dangerously (because of its dependence upon surgical modification) impractical ideal. But the tendency to market veganism via sex and sex appeal is not simply the purview of PETA—as should be apparent from the aforementioned list of "hottest" vegan celebrities, as well as the existence of amateur YouTube video image compilations that feature different configurations of famous vegan men and women, all of whom are touted for their sex appeal. The video "40 Sexy Vegan Men!!" features a comprehensive list of multiracial "eye candy" that includes rapper André 3000, Red Hot Chili Peppers' front man Anthony Kiedis, actor and brother of Julia, Eric Roberts, Canadian ice hockey player Georges Laraque, actor Joaquin Phoenix, American baseball player Pat Neshek, and poet Saul Williams, among numerous others. An apparent companion video, "Lovely Vegan Ladies!!" features a variety of female celebrities, including actors Alicia Silverstone, Persia White, and Alyssa Milano, rockers Fiona Apple and Joan Jett, and Olympian Seba Johnson.

Linking veganism to sex and sex appeal makes sense as a promotional strategy; the desire to be sexy—and to look like celebrities that we deem sexy—is a powerful motivator. But even with the exception of the YouTube compilations that feature a more multiracial smattering of celebrity vegans, the predominant discourse linking sex appeal to veganism is generated by PETA's various problematic and homogenizing ad campaigns. And even though the YouTube compilations feature vegans of different races, the standard of physical beauty and sex appeal that they perpetuate is one that is highly dependent upon the scrutinized celebrity's ability to shape his or her body into a cultural ideal that is largely unrealizable for the general consumer of these media. The sexy celebrity female vegan body is sculpted, toned, and often surgically altered; it is the product of personal training and is dependent upon the maintenance, at all cost, of its idealized status. Likewise, the sexy male vegan body is a paragon of rigorously maintained muscle. As if in response to these representations, Tumblr sites like "Fuck Yeah Sexy Vegans," the stated mission of which is to allow "sexy vegans [to] meet all of the other sexy vegans, and to show that vegans come from all walks of life, and hopefully dispel some common myths about us," feature photos of noncelebrity

vegans who post their images to dispel the homogeneous notions of both what it means to look like a vegan and what it means to be sexy. Nonetheless, the majority of sexy vegan images that proliferate on the Web are images of a particular kind of celebrity, and PETA's marketing of veganism via sex appeal generates an image of the vegan body as a constant project dependent upon conformity to a problematic and highly artificial ideal.

Mac and Mike: Animals and Humans

Another PETA commercial that generated much ire features a woman wearing a neck brace, walking on a sidewalk, clutching her coat, and grimacing in pain. Comedian Kevin Nealon, the narrator, tells us that the woman is named Jessica and "suffers from BWVAKTBOOM, 'Boyfriend Went Vegan and Knocked the Bottom Out of Me,' a painful condition that occurs when boyfriends go vegan and can suddenly bring it like a tantric porn star." The woman returns to her apartment, where her boyfriend, who is repairing a hole in the wall that, we realize, was caused when Jessica's head hit it during rough sex, asks if she is feeling better. She throws a bag of vegetables to him, smiles, and starts taking off her clothes. The ad, released on Valentine's Day 2012, was widely criticized for promoting violence against women despite the fact that, according to PETA's associate director of campaigns and outreach, Lindsay Rajt, the commercial is "tongue-in-cheek": "She had vigorous sex, so she looks disheveled. But the bottom line is, she's coming back from the grocery store with an armful of vegetables because she enjoyed it so much" (qtd. in Murray, "Does This PETA Ad"). Nonetheless, much Internet commentary about the ad has focused on its supposed glorification of domestic violence and, again, its refusal to recognize a link between violence against animals and violence against women.[4] While this ad promotes, as much of PETA's recent media does, the idea that a vegan diet leads to better sex, in its focus on the boyfriend's increased libido, the ad also promotes the idea that veganism constitutes a kind of hypermasculinity that makes the average guy—and the man featured in the commercial is not only "average" but also thin and nerdy—capable of spectacular feats of strength and stamina that potentially cross over into sexual violence and abuse.

And strength and stamina seemed to be the attributes being marketed by the vegan media in 2012. In its Best of 2012 issue, for example, premier vegan magazine *VegNews* chose to honor, instead of a person of the year (as is the magazine's tendency), the vegan athlete: "Instead of giving Person of the Year to one specific change-maker, we have chosen to honor The Vegan Athlete, who burst onto the scene in 2012—winning races, writing books, beating

competitors, and, perhaps most importantly, changing mainstream minds" ("The Vegan Athlete" 38). The ensuing article lists such notable vegan athletes as 2011 world heavyweight wrestling champion Daniel Bryan, ultrarunner Scott Jurek, world boxing welterweight Timothy Bradley, Houston Texans' running back Arian Foster, and professional racecar driver Leilani Münter. In the case of *VegNews*'s recognition of the "year of the vegan athlete," as in the PETA Valentine's Day commercial, the product that is being marketed is increased virility as a result of a vegan diet, and it is a product that is being marketed almost exclusively to men. Furthermore, many of the men featured in the *VegNews* article are athletes in sports that are combative in nature: wrestling, boxing, and football.

The increased focus on "Mean Vegans"—the title of Alyssa Giacobbe's June 3, 2012, *New York* magazine article, which features, among others, several fighters, an arm wrestler, a stuntman, and a hockey player—points to a current focus on veganism as a source of masculine physical strength and athleticism (as I discussed in the preceding chapter); along with that focus has manifested an interesting linkage between aggression—even to the point of violence—and veganism, yet unlike the violence associated with veganism's supposed links to terrorism (like that attributed to "vicious," "violent" vegan Andreas San Diego), this violence is aimed at supposedly appropriate and acceptable targets—opponents in the ring or on the field, or, as PETA's neck brace ad problematically indicates, women. The media has been increasingly fascinated by the seeming disconnect between a plant-based diet and masculine strength, and the attention to and explicit support of vegan violent masculinity point to both U.S. culture's increasing tolerance and promotion of real and representational violence and an overreaction to veganism's historical associations with femininity and pacifism.[5] That men can be vegan and be successful athletes, particularly successful fighters, constitutes a kind of anathema to mainstream conceptions that the consumption of meat is necessary for testosterone-driven athletic success.

Perhaps no athlete has done more to raise the profile of veganism within this contingent than mixed martial arts fighter and Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) champion Mac Danzig, who became vegan in 2004 and was featured on Spike's reality series *The Ultimate Fighter*, where he emerged as the winner of season 6 in 2007. The show featured UFC fighters training and living together in a house in Las Vegas, as well as the fights that resulted in their gradual elimination from the show, and Danzig's veganism, about which he was very outspoken, sparked curiosity, ridicule, and speculation among the other contestants. According to Frank Curreri, "Danzig's diet made him a glaring anomaly in the MMA and society in general, where carnivores are widely presumed to have a huge edge in the all-important strength depart-

ment," and throughout his career, Danzig "shouldered plenty of criticism and battled misperceptions about his eating habits."

As a result of the show, which propelled mixed martial arts fighting into the mainstream and made veganism a topic of conversation among those who watched the show, Danzig became famous "almost out of nowhere" (Fowlkes), and since that time, his status as a vegan has garnered him, perhaps surprisingly, an increasing level of respect. In an interview, Frank Curreri mentioned to Danzig the stereotypes associated with vegan athletes and asked Danzig if he felt that earlier perceptions of his diet as extreme had changed. Danzig answered,

> Yeah! Over the last few years there have been a lot of changes in perception. When people first started realizing that I was Vegan, I was the odd man out. I was the only person in combat sports doing it. . . . It didn't matter how many fights I won, whenever I'd lose people would always criticize my diet.
>
> But now you have fighters turning to similar diets for health reasons. . . . And more and more people started doing it, so I don't find myself getting criticized as much. I've been getting more and more positive feedback. People do seem more curious about the diet and more accepting.

Danzig, who is vegan as much for ethical as for health reasons, was also featured in Lee Fulkerson's 2011 film *Forks over Knives*, a documentary that asserted that perhaps all degenerative diseases that affect humans could be reversed by adopting a plant-based diet.

In many ways, Danzig blazed a trail for other athletes to adopt vegan diets and for that dietary and lifestyle choice to be viewed not only as acceptable but even as exemplary, an indicator of commitment and focus to a rigorous and strenuous athleticism. Bolstered by former Ironman competitor and endurance athlete Brendan Brazier's Vega line of nutritional supplements and his Thrive diet books, which include *Thrive Fitness: The Vegan-Based Training Program for Maximum Strength, Health, and Fitness* (2009), veganism has become a much more respectable and desirable option for many athletes who see, through the examples set by their celebrity peers, its benefits to performance and health. In addition to Danzig and Brazier, there are many celebrity vegan athletes upon whom I could focus, but I want to look specifically at the media attention paid to former heavyweight boxer Mike Tyson's decision to become vegan in order to examine the ways that his race and the media's coverage of his various past transgressions—his 1992 rape conviction, his 2003 bankruptcy, and his biting off a piece of Evander Holyfield's ear in 2007—have impacted the public discourse about his veganism, which Tyson declared on *The Ellen DeGeneres Show* in 2011. Tyson, the former heavyweight champion of the world, a title he held from 1987 until 1990, is now retired; he was as infamous during his early career for his reputation, extravagance, and marital

and legal entanglements as he was famous for his boxing prowess. In examining the rhetoric generated by the media during Tyson's trial and subsequent conviction for raping then eighteen-year-old Desiree Washington, Jack Lule notes that only two images of the fighter emerged: "He was either a crude, sex-obsessed, violent savage who could barely control his animal instincts or he was a victim of terrible social circumstances" (181).

Ellis Cashmore notes the persistence of the animal metaphor so often used to describe Tyson both for his prowess in the ring and his behavior outside of it: "Popularly depicted as a monster, a psycho, a reprobate, and, most repeatedly, an animal, Tyson demanded our attention" (6). Lule claims that the media's treatment of Tyson reduced his reality to one of two "opposing archetypes for African Americans: the animal savage and the helpless, hapless victim" (177). In addition to a long history of the rhetorical conflation of African American and animal bodies, the bodies of athletes, particularly those who engage in combat sports, are often elided with the bodies of animals in the media rhetoric used to describe them. In each case, the metaphor works in different ways. With regard to African American history, equating African Americans with animals functions to dehumanize them and, historically, to justify their enslavement. As A. Breeze Harper notes, such a legacy underscores the lack of an animal-rights focus as the impetus for many African Americans who choose a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle: "Skipping over the not yet fully attained human rights for animal rights would not go over well with a constituency that . . . [is] also dealing with a collective colonial past that once equated black people . . . as animals" ("Going Beyond" 163).

But with regard to describing the athlete's body via animal metaphors, the rhetorical strategy is laudatory and seeks to render the athlete as pure *body*, a being who, in his or her intense focus on the body, has perfected its functionality to the point of instinct; when animal metaphors are used to describe athletic accomplishment, it is because that accomplishment lies outside the supposed realm of human attainment. In the case of Mike Tyson, his depiction as an animal in the media has been, in a professional sense, in the service of describing his speed, agility, and strength, but in its consistent descriptions of him as both a "savage" and a "brute," that rhetoric has functioned to render him a mindless beast, a racialized caricature of the threat posed by supposed instinctual black male sexual aggression.[6] And when he bit off a chunk of Evander Holyfield's ear during a match in 1997, Tyson became a cannibal as well.[7]

Since his earlier indiscretions, Tyson has largely reinvented himself (with much help from the media), converting to Islam while in prison for rape, suffering the loss of his four-year-old daughter in 2009, and getting sober and becoming vegan as a result. In a 2011 article on CBSNews.com, Tyson challenges the dehumanizing discourse that has constituted his public

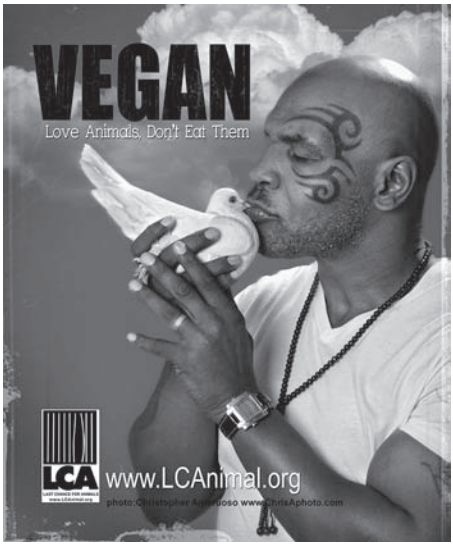
experience: "I don't want to be no animal no more." He continues, "I keep always thinking about Mark Twain, that human beings have to be taught to be human beings. Some people learn to be human beings faster than others. Some people catch on late. . . . I'm catching on a little late, but I'm getting it, though. I'm getting it" ("Mike Tyson"). Much of the media's focus on this new, more "human" and humane Mike Tyson has considered his Animal Planet reality series *Taking on Tyson*, which aired six episodes in 2011 and chronicled his love of raising and racing pigeons. The media has also focused on his decision to become vegan. In March 2011 Tyson opened up on *The Ellen DeGeneres Show* about his sobriety and veganism, changes that he made as a result of his daughter's death. He told DeGeneres, who is also vegan and even maintains a "Going Vegan with Ellen" page on her show's website, "I wanted to change." At the time of the interview, Tyson had been vegan for two years, noting, "It's an awesome feeling." The characteristics associated with this new Tyson, a trimmed-down, serene, animal-loving, and family-oriented vegan, are the product of the transformation of his former image as "the baddest man on the planet" to a man shaped by grief, introspection, compassion, and humility. It is a metamorphosis marketed by Animal Planet to sell *Taking on Tyson*; as the show's executive producer, Jason Carey, notes, "In the past the world looked on Mike as a pariah," but now Mike Tyson "is really at a stage in his life where he is trying to transform himself" (qtd. in Clark and Smolowe).

In the case of Mac Danzig, veganism initially placed the fighter on the margins of his sport, as such a dietary position situated him as an anomaly. Danzig was vegan at the beginning of his celebrity fighting career—in his first act, so to speak—and he brought veganism and mixed martial arts fighting to the public stage simultaneously. After proving his strength and skill in spite of or perhaps because of his veganism, however, Danzig has contributed to veganism's current status as a product marketed to and embraced by athletes who aim to emulate fighters like Danzig and perform at the top of their game. While, as I have demonstrated throughout the course of this study, there has been a backlash against veganism that has worked to associate it with femininity, idealism, and disordered consumption, within the world of elite athletics, veganism has gained a foothold as a means to masculine physical strength and prowess.

In the case of Mike Tyson, however, veganism functions somewhat differently. Tyson is the quintessential hegan, a man who adopted veganism as a second act, one that would allow him to reenter mainstream discourse, this time as a human being and not an animal. And he refuses to consider that his diet is anything other than quintessentially heterosexual and masculine. In an article in *Rolling Stone* that examined his one-man Broadway show *The Undisputed Truth*, Tyson said of veganism, "You hear from some people—what

do they call it? Rabbit food? Fag food? I will kick somebody's ass if they keep talking some 'fag food' shit" (qtd. in Weiner). Tyson's homophobic rants are somewhat legendary, including a well-documented incident when, after biting Lennox Lewis on the leg during a press conference in 2002, Tyson shouted, "I'll fuck you in the arse, you fucking faggot. I'll fuck you in the arse till you love me, you faggot" (qtd. in Tatchell), and have led to speculation that he may in fact be gay. According to Peter Tatchell, "While there is no evidence that Tyson is gay, he certainly acts like a repressed, self-loathing, misogynistic gay man. . . . If I saw him in the street, I would assume he was gay. His favourite insults are violent, graphic threats to sodomise men, revealing a perverse preoccupation with anal sex." For the retired Tyson, veganism is not about a training regimen; it is instead about redemption, purification, and absolution from past transgressions. Nonetheless, it must be consistently rendered appropriately masculine and, therefore, heterosexual in order to receive acknowledgment from the former "baddest man on the planet"; in truth, it is a choice worthy of a man whose animal past still creeps into his more human future.

But because of the ways that Tyson has been rhetorically elided with animals over the course of his life, his decision to become vegan resonates in ways that position his quest for his own humanity within a framework that at least tacitly and perhaps explicitly acknowledges the linkages between the dehumanization of people—particularly African American men like Tyson (who have also been feminized via the heterosexist principles of such othering)—and the exploitation of nonhuman animals; the connections, in essence, are ecofeminist. According to the *Taking on Tyson* web page, "Tyson's first fight was over a pet pigeon, whose neck had been sadistically broken by one of his peers." The implication, of course, is that Tyson's subsequent career as a fighter has been about championing the wounded (or murdered) animal, whether literal pigeon or rhetorical brute. The media for the show presented Tyson as a man whose early experiences of loss and violence drove him to seek solace among his pet pigeons; as he has said, "It took my mind off the world I was living in, people bullying me and stuff" (qtd. in



Billboard advertisement bearing Mike Tyson's image for Last Chance for Animals (LCA) in West Hollywood.

Wiedeman). The show, with its focus on pigeon racing, a sport that requires captive pigeons to endure extreme conditions that often kill them, was protested by PETA, and, indeed, the realities of pigeon racing place it at odds with the animal-liberationist politics espoused by most animal-advocacy organizations.

Nonetheless, Tyson's public alignment with these animals and his allowing his image and the texts "vegan" and "love animals, don't eat them" to appear on a Last Chance for Animals (LCA) billboard in West Hollywood work to situate his veganism as linked to an animal-rights ethos despite the fact that Tyson seems, in many ways, an unlikely candidate to embrace such a position. However, the image of Tyson in a white T-shirt, his face with iconic modern tribal tattoo in profile as he gently holds and kisses a white dove, is rhetorically powerful stuff: the man once rendered a metaphorical animal in the media seeks his own humanity through a connection with real animals, and his veganism, while never explicitly about animal rights (as I stated above, Tyson's veganism has been part of his bodily purification and transformation), nonetheless draws an implicit parallel between the redemption of Tyson the animal and an ethic that is averse to the exploitation of actual animals for food.

Will the Real Vegan Please Stand Up? Celebrity and the Indeterminacy of Veganism

In a 2009 episode of Bravo's *Top Chef Masters*, the challenge was to prepare a meal for actor Zooey Deschanel and her friends, and the meal had to be vegan, soy free, and gluten free. The stipulations flustered the contestants (with the notable exceptions of Rick Bayless and Hubert Keller, who seemed to both understand and embrace the challenge), who included the likes of Oprah Winfrey's former personal chef Art Smith, celebrity chef and host of *Napa Style* Michael Chiarello, and New York restaurateur Anita Lo, who scrambled to concoct dishes that would suit such a diet. And the chefs made no attempt to hide their disdain for the restrictions such limitations placed on their abilities to utilize their more familiar culinary pallets of meat, dairy, and eggs. According to Chiarello, "Zooey's diet goes like this: think of the things you like to cook and just say no. . . . It's all about no's. It's off-putting to say the least," and judge Jay Rayner added, "In my experience of vegan food it tends to be a symphony of beige." Despite food critic Gael Greene's assertion that "the vegans seemed surprised" by how good the food was because "God knows what they get to eat," the episode highlighted not so much the limita-

tions of a vegan diet as the way that these celebrity chefs were stifled in their creativity by their adherence to culinary traditions that center around meat and dairy. In fact, Art Smith was so flummoxed that he purchased (instead of created) the key component of his dessert, vanilla Rice Dream (a nondairy frozen dessert), which he served with strawberries—a gaffe for which he was eliminated from the show for the season.[8]

In the wake of this episode emerged much buzz about the fact that Zooey Deschanel, like her sister Emily, was vegan. The truth, however, is that she isn't. Her diet is the product of various food allergies; she decided to be vegan as a result, and the decision lasted about six months. By the time the episode of *Top Chef Masters* aired, Deschanel had already given up on veganism, noting, "At a certain point, you just have to go, 'You know, this gets in the way of my living too much.' . . . I think I was at a sushi restaurant and I was like, 'Oh. Fuck it'" (qtd. in Yuan). In terms of celebrity vegan PR, such instances are disastrous, eliciting as they do much analysis of why the celebrity in question could not commit to a vegan diet, particularly when that celebrity states that such a diet is too restrictive or unhealthy.

As Elena Gorgan notes, "When celebrities go vegan, they do so with a lot of fuss and countless media interviews meant to encourage others . . . to go down the same path," and "when stars turn their back on veganism, some criticism inevitably appears." Bryce Dallas Howard, a longtime vegan, began eating meat after the birth of her son, citing "a rare condition that was triggered by pregnancy, where consuming the amino acids from meat became critical to [her] health" (qtd. in Gorgan). And Natalie Portman, who, as I have mentioned elsewhere in this study, proclaimed in a *Huffington Post* editorial that Jonathan Safran Foer's *Eating Animals* turned her into a "vegan activist," dropped veganism while she was pregnant only to seemingly pick it back up again after giving birth; her wedding, fourteen months after the birth of her son, was an all-vegan affair (Jones and McNiece).

Such dietary shifts are not uncommon within either the general or the celebrity population, of course, but because of the ways that celebrity veganism is situated within our public discourse, when a presumed vegan celebrity suddenly is not vegan or is indeterminately vegan, that celebrity is often positioned as emblematic of the impossibility of following a vegan ethic or of having engaged in a disingenuous pretense. Because Natalie Portman so publicly and forcefully declared herself a vegan activist, her decision to go back to being vegetarian was met with pronounced derision from both vegans and nonvegans alike. In a radio interview, Portman stated, "I know there are people who do stay vegan . . . but I think you have to just be careful, watch your iron levels and your B12 levels and supplement those if there are things you might be low in your diet" (qtd. in Moisse). In response, the author of the

blog *The Veganomaly* wrote an open letter to Portman criticizing her for being so "weak willed":

> It isn't bad enough that you declare yourself a vegan activist and quicker than you can say "casomorphins," you publicly declare yourself a *former* vegan activist. . . . Do you know how much work you created for all of us? Every person capable of snidely hitting the forward button sent us your compelling interview because, while these idiots don't consider you an authority on nutrition when you decide to go vegan, whadayya know—when you ditch the v-word like last year's Dior, then suddenly it's all "that's *Dr*. Natalie Portman to you, you vegan idiots."

Furthermore, the author of the blog *The Superficial* derided the provegan media condemnation—of people like the author of *The Veganomaly*, for example—that followed Portman's statement in the same interview that "if you're not eating eggs, then you can't have cookies or cake from regular bakeries, which can become a problem when that's all you want to eat" (qtd. in Moisse): "Basically Natalie Portman has gone from one pretentious lifestyle to a slightly less pretentious one. My, God, she's practically Hitler. An ironically Jewish Hitler, but Hitler nonetheless. . . . Herr Führer wants macaroons!" In both of these blogs, Portman's decision not to be vegan is criticized, but the reasons for the criticism are markedly different: *The Veganomaly* chastises Portman for giving fodder to the antivegan position, while *The Superficial* considers her now-defunct veganism mere pretense and only slightly more annoying than her current vegetarianism. Such an instance demonstrates a kind of public tug-of-war waged between vegans who want to claim celebrities as members of their camp and nonvegans who want to demonstrate the impossibility and faddishness of veganism.

Along with former vegan celebrities like Portman (or Angelina Jolie, or Ginnifer Goodwin, or any number of others) there is also a kind of constant speculation about the status of celebrities who are rumored to be vegan or vegetarian, particularly, as I mentioned in an earlier chapter of this study, people like the omnivorous Kristen Stewart, whose portrayal of a vegetarian Bella Swan in *Twilight* and of real-life vegan Joan Jett in *The Runaways* led to her being classified as vegetarian on numerous websites. Similarly, Elijah Wood, perhaps because of his resemblance to Toby Maguire, who is vegan, is often rumored to be vegan despite the fact that he has tweeted that he is not.[9] The very public debate over the vegan status of certain celebrities illustrates the way that veganism signifies in the current moment as a position that has gained visibility and popularity but that also occupies a space carefully scrutinized for its potential as a fad, something tried on and then easily discarded. And as with much of the discourse about veganism, the issue of legitimacy features prominently in ways that establish a clear and impossible binary

opposition: What, in the case of celebrity, constitutes being vegan *enough*? Or, even more interesting, is it possible to be vegan *too much*? With regard to celebrity vegans, we find ourselves back at the position stated by Harold Fromm in his 2010 *Chronicle of Higher Education* editorial, caught between vegans' supposed impossible desire to be "pure spirit" and their reality as embodied beings caught in the cycle of life and death. But what makes the celebrity position even more fraught are our own paradoxical cultural impositions upon it: we require that celebrities constantly change in order to remain relevant, but we are intolerant and critical of them when they do change.

To embody such a politically and socially loaded paradoxical position as vegan and then abandon that position generates confusion and hostility from vegans who invested the celebrity's veganism with disproportionate significance—who essentially attributed to the celebrity's body and actions an external meaning dependent upon the personal experience of the person *reading* the celebrity as text. Despite the fact that there is clearly a continuum between Zooey Deschanel's six-month attempt at veganism (*not enough*) and Woody Harrelson's longtime vegan, raw food environmentalism (*too much*), what constitutes an "acceptable" and sustainable position on that continuum is the subject of constant debate. Harrelson, for example, invoked the ire of Anthony Bourdain, who called him out for going to Thailand and eating raw, thereby "turning up his nose" at that culture's food: "So rude and anti-human and contemptuous of this planet and other nations and other cultures, and that's where I get pissed off" (qtd. in Crispin). It seems largely impossible for vegan celebrities, by mere virtue of their celebrity status, to generate a balanced response to veganism or to be viewed as appropriately vegan—and such a reality again points to the position that veganism occupies in the twenty-first century as an identity category that, despite decades of codified existence, is still largely antithetical to the lifestyles of most Americans, even as veganism is situated more and more fully within the mainstream. The tensions between veganism's fringe-relegating animal advocacy and mainstream apolitical acceptability never seem adequately resolved.

Into this fraught discussion enter two talk-show hosts, Ellen DeGeneres and Oprah Winfrey, both of whom have used their public platforms to explore and advocate for veganism in vastly different ways, and both of whom have created debate with regard to that advocacy, particularly in terms of what constitutes being vegan *enough* and what constitutes being vegan *appropriately*. In an interview with Katie Couric, Ellen DeGeneres discussed her decision to become vegan in 2008 as the result of having read Friedman and Barnouin's *Skinny Bitch* and having watched the 2005 documentary *Earthlings*, a film with a soundtrack by Moby, directed by Shaun Monson, coproduced by Maggie Q., and narrated by Joaquin Phoenix, all of whom are vegans. She told Couric, "You see that and you go, 'I can't participate in that. I can't be a

part of something that is suffering.'" In discussing her reasons for becoming vegan, DeGeneres stated, "I do it because I love animals, and I saw the reality, and I just couldn't ignore it anymore." DeGeneres and wife Portia de Rossi are both vegan, and DeGeneres has used her talk show, *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*, as a platform for interviewing vegan guests (like Bill Clinton and Mike Tyson) and for raising awareness about animal welfare and promoting veganism.[10] Furthermore, her blog, *Going Vegan with Ellen*, contains vegan recipes (many of which center around meat substitutes), health information, and resources for anyone interested in going vegan.

DeGeneres's personal chef, Roberto Martin, published a book, *Vegan Cooking for Carnivores*, in 2012. It contains many of the recipes he created for DeGeneres and de Rossi: "Martin said the key to helping people make the switch or even simply reduce their consumption of animal products is to think about creative substitutions" (Kayal). One of the predominant ways that advocates of veganism encourage adoption of a vegan "diet" is by encouraging nonvegans to try meat substitutes, which allow for easy conversion of meat-based dishes and are, therefore, an easy way to transition, but there is much commentary as to the appropriateness of such substitutes with regard to veganism. Hanna Brooks Olsen notes the recent explosion of meat substitutes and asserts that "more meaty-tasting meat substitutes means more processed, frozen, high-in-sodium, lab-made food products with large carbon footprints and health concerns of their own."[11] A post on the blog *Foodtrainers* encourages us to "fill your plate with 'real food' veggie options, something that can benefit all of us," instead of eating meat substitutes. Nonetheless, Olsen notes that if getting omnivores to eat less meat—even just once a week—is the goal, "then the fake meat industry is on target. And for activist groups like FARM and PETA, that is truly the focus—not improved health or sustainability, but simply getting fewer people to eat animal products." In the context of such dietary discourse, fake meat products may further an animal-advocacy position, which, as I have asserted, is the primary reason that most people become vegan, but they do so in a way that is unselfconscious and that undermines the health and environmental benefits of a more holistic plant-based diet.

Furthermore, despite her very vocal position with regard to both her veganism and her feelings about animal welfare, DeGeneres has garnered some sharp criticism for being a spokesmodel for Cover Girl, a company that tests its cosmetics on animals. According to Lacy J. Hanson, DeGeneres "has had an ongoing relationship with Cover Girl, one of the largest brands in the United States that conducts animal testing. . . . Many are confused by the hypocrisy that the vegan promotion [DeGeneres's blog] and cosmetic company relationship seem to present."[12] Even as she is able to embody and advocate for a vegan ethic based on an animal welfare position, DeGeneres's continued relationship with Cover Girl illustrates the ease with which a pub-

lic stance on ethical veganism can be undermined when celebrities endorse products created by companies that do not share that same ethic. Despite the fact that veganism and animal welfare may be her agenda, in her capacity as spokesperson for Cover Girl, DeGeneres's body is nonetheless "carrying someone else's message" (Luks), that of a cosmetics company that tests its products on animals.

In contrast to DeGeneres's outspoken ethical vegan position, talk-show mogul Oprah Winfrey—on whose show DeGeneres came out as gay in 1997—is not vegan, although she has publicly maintained a vegan diet twice, both times in response to the mandates of author Kathy Freston, whose book *Quantum Wellness: A Practical and Spiritual Guide to Health and Happiness* inspired Winfrey's twenty-one-day vegan "cleanse" in 2008. In 2011 Freston, along with *The Omnivore's Dilemma* author Michael Pollan, were guests on an episode of Winfrey's show, which focused on the politics of so-called ethical consumption and even featured a segment of Lisa Ling's visit to a slaughterhouse. Clearly, the attempt was to present both veganism and animal slaughter in ways that would not offend or alienate members of Winfrey's audience and to normalize and render both options palatable; while such an attempt at balance may be admirable, the result was much criticism: "Animal-rights activists appeared divided on the episode's merits, with many commenting on Twitter and Facebook that they appreciated the exposure Oprah offered veganism but didn't appreciate the tone of the segment on animal slaughter, which some viewed as downplaying the inherent cruelty of killing animals for food" (Barnett). Freston's 2011 book, *Veganist: Lose Weight, Get Healthy, Change the World*, served as the impetus for Winfrey and 378 of her staff to participate in a "Vegan Challenge" and eat vegan for one week. According to the show's webpage, of the initial 378 participants, 300 completed the challenge, and they collectively "lost 444 pounds and gained 84 pounds . . . and used a record amount of toilet paper. While most staffers who took on the challenge aren't switching over to vegan diets entirely, it did change the way a lot of them thought about food." The trials and successes of certain staff members were filmed, with Freston acting as guru and coach, offering cooking lessons and advice.

But despite the potential for Winfrey's considerable influence to impact the dietary choices of millions of viewers, every aspect of the episode—its tone, the vegan challenge, Michael Pollan's statements, and Kathy Freston's approach—had detractors. For example, in an editorial in the *Corridor Business Journal*, Laurie Johns writes of Winfrey's staffers' participation in the challenge: "First, let me say that I scoff at the concept that her adoring and subservient staff really ever had a choice to refuse the vegan challenge by their boss" (16). In a letter to Winfrey that he posted in a vegan forum, Andrew Kirschner questioned why Michael Pollan, a devout omnivore, was a guest on a show that featured a vegan focus and challenge, and he laid into Pollan's

"smug, dismissive, and patronizing" claim that "there is nothing wrong with eating animals. [Pollan] contends they only have one bad day (the day they're slaughtered)." And according to Douglas Robb, as a result of the episode, Freston has been branded a "pseudo-vegan" in some vegan circles: the "complaint is that instead of promoting a diet based on 'real food,' the participants were shown eating a variety of processed and packaged McVegan meals from Whole Foods."

Again, as was the case with DeGeneres's promotion of Cover Girl, Freston's advocacy of "fake" foods, processed and prepackaged items that often rely on a principle of meat substitution, contributes to the debate about what constitutes appropriate veganism. If the goal is to get people to forgo animal products, then Freston's and Winfrey's mainstream approach, with its inoffensive focus, attention to weight loss, and promotion of vegan foods that function as substitutes for meat-based dishes, would seem more effective than an approach that would require radical shifts in both perception about the treatment of animals and alterations in diet, but given that most people who actually successfully maintain a vegan lifestyle do so because of their convictions about the suffering of animals, Winfrey's mainstreaming strategy does not seem like a viable way of getting people to be vegan long-term. And the tendency with much of the celebrity-focused media about veganism as chronicled in this chapter is about "mainstreaming" veganism in ways that make it familiar and tolerable to the average American consumer; after all, the animal-liberation and animal-rights approach has served to alienate most people and to maintain veganism's fringe position.[13]

And many vegans find such a mainstream approach problematic and antithetical to a position that, they feel, should link healthful dietary consumption with advocacy for and explicit attention to the plight of animals. In the discourse generated with regard to celebrity veganism, a counterposition is stated by noncelebrity vegans who echo Bill Compton's former nest mate on *True Blood* who claimed, as I noted earlier in this study, "Mainstreaming's for pussies." In the context of such a position, *real* vegans, therefore, are not celebrities. They are not using their bodies to sell an ethical position, nor are they willing to water down their reasons for choosing such a position. But by and large, it seems that, regardless of the divergent narratives produced by and in response to vegan celebrity (that veganism is sexy and sexual; that veganism is "the latest celebrity diet"; that veganism leads to masculine strength and stamina), the discussion produced as a result of celebrity veganism in the past few years is in many ways a positive counter to the vegan backlash that immediately preceded it. It has created visibility for veganism even as it has generated debate with regard to what constitutes and defines the identity politics associated with veganism.

That the narrative celebrity veganism dictates is contradictory, an enmeshment of sex and violence, whole foods and processed meat substitutes, animal advocacy and problematic corporate sponsorship, is unsurprising given the long paradoxical challenges that have shaped the story of plant-based diets throughout recorded history. It asks us to consider whether twenty-first-century veganism remains a radical challenge to the status quo via a persistent focus on animal welfare and animal rights or whether, in its embrace of a more liberal and mainstream politics that in many ways downplays an animal-rights focus in order to appeal to a broader audience, veganism has been fully co-opted by the hegemonic processes that shape social ideology. But it is a narrative that constitutes a large part of the current discourse about veganism, a project that will continue to shift and change as we move farther into the twenty-first century.

CONCLUSION

National and Personal Narratives

Some Thoughts on the Future of Vegan Studies

At the conclusion of this work, I want to consider the role that both our national and personal narratives play in the way that veganism might continue to be a productive area of study in the future, and I want to begin with where we are in terms of our national narrative about our War on Terror. In his preface to his 2013 book, *What Changed When Everything Changed: 9/11 and the Making of National Identity*, Joseph Margulies asks, "How does the United States justify the betrayal of its professed values" in an age when the United States has curbed both civil liberties and human rights during an endless War on Terror? His answer is less about justification than about the constant project of re-creating our myth of national identity:

> When Americans come upon a social arrangement they want to preserve, they do not alter their behavior to fit their values; they alter their values to fit their behavior. They change what it means to be an American, reshaping the meaning and content of shared ideals like religious liberty, community membership, personal dignity, the rule of law, and other elements of national identity. In that way, the behavior itself is always imagined as completely congenial to the creed. Turns out it was a trick question. (xi)

Even as President Obama has worked to distance himself from the rhetoric of the War on Terror via troop drawdowns and the removal of some prisoners from Guantánamo Bay, this war and what it means to our national identity rage on. In May 2013, in a moment of extreme optimism, *Washington Post* columnist Eugene Robinson declared, "It is time to declare victory and get on with our lives," while just over a year later, Massimo Calabrasi claimed in a *Time* magazine article that the war is far from over: in addition to the emergence of the Al-Qaeda-inspired Islamist group ISIS in Anbar province, "the [Bowe] Bergdahl affair has derailed Obama's Gitmo closure plans. . . . And in Nigeria, Boko Haram's kidnapping of 200 young girls drove Obama to deploy a U.S. special forces team to help in the hunt." As we toggle between imagining ourselves complicit in an endless war and alternately believing, however fleetingly, that there may be some eventual peace, our national self-conception also morphs and alters in an attempt to accommodate the divergent and often contradictory threads that constitute our national identity.

Our national narrative about veganism as it plays out in the public sphere—in the mainstream, in the media, and in literature—in many ways mirrors this same process, as is apparent in the way that the tensions between veganism as dietary practice and identity category and between veganism as somewhat normalized health craze and animal-liberationist lunacy continue to play out in both familiar and novel ways in the second decade of the twenty-first century. An August 2014 Google news search for "vegan" pulled up three stories. One in the *Huffington Post* is titled "How to Date a Vegan" by Zoe Eisenberg, who asserts that "more and more vegans are popping up across the country as the plant-based lifestyle continues to trend. Celebrities are jumping on board, mega chains like Chipotle and Subway are swinging things meat-free," meaning that now that there are more vegans, there are more omnivores dating them. A story by Catherine Weiss in *E! Online* is titled "The Five Most Delicious Vegan Summer Treats." *ABC News* ran a story about a Detroit woman who accepted PETA's offer to help pay her water bill in return for her promise to become vegan. According to this story, PETA's (racially and socioeconomically insensitive) "campaign takes advantage of the recent water crisis in Detroit, where residents owe more than $89 million on past-due accounts, and more than 7,000 people have had their water shut off in recent weeks, prompting chaos in the bankrupt city" (Murray, "Detroit Woman"). Taken together, these divergent public stories paint an interesting and complex picture of U.S. veganism as a still largely fringe identity seeking integration into the mainstream *and* at the same moment a challenge and affront to the dominant framework, an outlandish bet we expect you won't take, even if not taking it means that you won't have any water.

I want to consider the future of vegan studies as existing somewhere between two gender-specific contemporary and polarizing examples of misogyny and pathology, both of which are grounded in my previous chapters' exploration of veganism even as these examples constitute more extreme instances than those I have already discussed. I chose these two because they are immediate, existing as products of the current historical moment and all that has led us to it. First, as if in answer to the "hegan" moniker of the last decade, there has been in the past few years a preponderance of a confrontational veganism, one that situates itself as overtly aggressive and unapologetically profane. In what is a pronounced backlash against the presumption that masculinity must be defined by the consumption of red meat, male veganism continues to be situated within a space that exists by virtue of its increasingly misogynist overdetermination of its difference from a veganism as practiced by women. Nowhere is this dichotomy more apparent than in the 2014 reissue of former Cro-Mags front man John Joseph's *Meat Is for Pussies: A How-To Guide for Dudes Who Want to Get Fit, Kick Ass, and Take Names*.[1] In the same way that *Skinny Bitch* aimed its confrontational and aggressive rhetoric straight at the hearts of women who wanted to be thin, *Meat Is for Pussies* targets men who

need to hear that eating vegetables actually makes a man an alpha male, not a "mama's boy" (2).

Writing as a "survivor who has gone to hell and back," Joseph appeals to "a culture of emasculated drones" (xi) who need to hear about how to transform their bodies and their psyches via veganism in order not to be effeminate pseudomen. As Kjerstin Johnson notes, "The hammering-home of 'Be a man and get ripped'" on the book's website seems to indicate that gender essentialism and macho culture are "the most important part of rethinking your diet," and she notes that "the book also is a prime example of 'single-issue' veganism, where you have the privilege of not addressing gender, trans, ability, class, or race related issues in the vegan discourse." The problem with this line of reasoning is apparent in the book's title. The use of the term "pussy" to *confrontationally* designate male weakness establishes a number of problematic hierarchical binaries that place heterosexual men on one side while conflating women and animals (via use of a term—pussy—that could designate both or either) on the other as subordinate and as that which one (male, heterosexual, vegan) should not want to be. Furthermore, the fact that "pussy" is a confrontational term explicitly implies aggression, a potentially violent altercation between the man directing the term at another man, a rhetorical attack that cannot, if a man is to defend his ever-tentative masculinity, go uncountered.

As Cheryl E. Abbate contends of our utilization of images of vegan male body builders, what is being sold is synonymous with PETA's positioning of idealized female bodies in its delivery of a vegan message: the ultramasculine vegan image undermines the reality that "masculinity is responsible for violence, especially violence against the weak or 'feminine.'" Even as Joseph's veganism is as much about animal liberation and welfare as it is about health and masculinity, his inability to recognize the linkages between the real oppression of animals and the rhetorical oppression of women (as in the use of the term "pussy" to designate both women's sexual organs and male weakness) serves to undermine any real argument he might make for animal rights. As Mark Bittman notes, "Joseph notes that 'nobody likes being preached at.' But that's all he does here, and it's not convincing." The argument is alienating, arrogant, and insulting: "If you're not a vegan, if you're not eating organic food at every opportunity, then you're a spineless wimp and an idiot and you need to change your life. (If you're a woman, this doesn't apply; you're not even directly addressed here.)"

The second example is of popular food blogger Jordan Younger, the so-called Blonde Vegan, who recently admitted to having the eating disorder orthorexia, a dangerous preoccupation with avoiding food she perceives as unhealthy. In addition to her blog, Younger's Instagram account had seventy thousand followers. Since admitting on June 23, 2014, that she was suffer-

ing from an eating disorder, she has changed the name of her blog from *The Blonde Vegan* to *The Balanced Blonde*. She notes: "'This was a huge step for me and I think another step in my recovery, just from shedding that label and limitations,' she said. 'Several months ago I thought I could never change my diet, so becoming The Balanced Blonde is like stepping into a whole new realm of possibility'" (qtd. in Engel). Younger now eats fish, chicken, and eggs and writes about her struggle with orthorexia. While the term "orthorexia" was coined by physician Steven Bratman in 1997, it is not listed in the DSM-5, and very little research has been done on the topic. Nonetheless, the term has begun to creep into the U.S. lexicon as a way of distinguishing between healthy eating and obsession with healthy eating—a perhaps understandable need in a culture in which the unhealthy is pervasive, easily and readily consumable, and cheap, while alternatives to it are often ill-defined, esoteric, and expensive.

But what is troubling about orthorexia—and with Younger's embrace of it—is the way that yet another term designating disordered consumption has been readily added to the narrative about veganism, particularly veganism as practiced by women. The news coverage of Younger's admission has been pervasive in its assertion that veganism caused her orthorexia, which again fuels the discourse of women's food choices as disordered, veganism as pathological, and the very concept of "healthful" eating as suspect.[2] Even as I do not want to discount Younger's struggle with an eating disorder—nor do I want to discount the ways that nonnormative diets are, as I have noted earlier in this study, in some sense necessarily disordered (by mere virtue of being nonnormative)—"orthorexia" is simply another term used to pathologize veganism in an attempt to understand and explain a complex set of circumstances that lead certain people not to eat. In new and different ways, veganism continues to be viewed, treated, and discussed as a form of restriction, which is the main reason for its association with eating disorders. Such a characterization, as should be abundantly clear at this point, gets veganism entirely wrong. Younger herself buys into the rhetoric of restriction: "I don't find very much enjoyment in being completely obsessed over what I'm going to eat for my next meal and how perfectly clean it's going to be—that's why I've been working my butt off to ditch the labels and go completely *restriction-free* for the last several weeks" (my emphasis). But what seems to my mind even more of an issue is the absence of an animal-ethics position in Younger's vegan practice, which could inform a different and more productive way of thinking about the meaning of her own politics of consumption.

As we consider these extremes, I do not want to imply that the moment in which we find ourselves is marked only by extremes in terms of our understanding of veganism. Perhaps we find ourselves in a space where such

extremes exist now because of the careful study of veganism and vegan representation that makes up this volume, study that is clearly indicative of the often problematic post-9/11 transitional mentalities that continue to attempt to frame and situate veganism within an uncertain and ever-shifting cultural trajectory. It is also very much worth noting that we find ourselves in the space that has produced the likes of Thug Kitchen, a website named *Saveur*'s Best New Food Blog of 2013, which implores the reader to "eat like you give a fuck" as it delivers vegan recipes to readers with a dose of often hilarious profanity that functions as both parody and informational tool, mocking the idea that veganism is the sole purview of the elite or the macho or the feminine. On the FAQ page, Thug Kitchen claims (in all caps), "THIS SITE IS HERE TO HELP YOUR NARROW DIETARY MINDED ASS EXPLORE SOME FUCKING OPTIONS SO THAT YOU CAN LOOK AND FEEL LIKE A FUCKING CHAMP. . . . EVERYONE DESERVES TO FEEL A PART OF OUR COUNTRY'S PUSH TOWARD A HEALTHIER DIET, NOT JUST PEOPLE WITH DISPOSABLE INCOMES WHO SPEAK A CERTAIN WAY. WE AIM TO EDUCATE AS WELL AS ENTERTAIN, MOTHER FUCKER."

But with the September 2014 disclosure of the identities of Thug Kitchen's creators (Michelle Davis and Matt Holloway) and with the release of the Thug Kitchen cookbook immediately thereafter has come a pronounced backlash against the authors, both of whom are white. Akeya Dickson refers to the project as blackface; Bryant Terry notes that "whether or not the hipsters and health nuts charmed by Thug Kitchen realize this, vegetarian, vegan and plant-strong culture in the black experience predates pernicious thug stereotypes." In a 9 October 2014 blog post, A. Breeze Harper addresses the politics of appropriating the term "thug" in a post–Trayvon Martin era, and in her "Open Letter to the Perpetrators of Thug Kitchen," pattrice jones implicates the authors in the deaths of Eric Garner and Mike Brown: "You really are, I suppose, just as ice-blooded as 'thugs' are stereotyped to be. You keep on joking and self-promoting your own 'thug' brand while people perceived as 'thugs' literally die on the streets."

We also find ourselves in the space of such entities as Draculaura, the vegan vampire daughter of Dracula, featured as part of Mattel's Monster High collection of toys. Finally, this is the historical moment when Ed Coffin implores us to please stop "listening to our bodies." He notes that there are certainly legitimate reasons to listen to one's body (if one is having chest pain, for example); "however, there are many people who make a completely irrational attempt to justify their 'need' to consume animal products by using the 'listening to my body' argument." And then he delivers a scientific smackdown that undermines the veracity of the body's supposed need for animal products.

These examples allow us to recognize and negotiate the space between the extreme public narratives of "meat for pussies" and "orthorexia," both of which fail to operate via the ecofeminist principle that I have argued would allow for a nuanced and productive consideration of linked oppressions. As a final counter that seeks to address that omission, I want to offer anecdotal evidence in the form of personal narratives that take on the veganism–as–eating disorder narrative that insidiously continues to creep into our national understanding of veganism. I offer these because personal narrative should also be a part of the vegan studies project, as the personal provides nuance and depth to the incomplete and ever-shifting nature of the public narrative. To return to the concept of the ineffective rite of passage as it relates to both anorexia and vegetarianism that I addressed in chapter 4, I put forth an assertion that works to further differentiate vegetarianism from veganism, as one is not simply a more "severe" form of the other: for some individuals caught shuttling between vegetarianism and anorexia, caught in a space that seems to support the perpetual linkage between the two, veganism may very well function as the culmination of a successful, ecofeminist rite of passage, an identity category that allows food to accomplish the transformative function that anorexia unsuccessfully asks it to serve. Because veganism may very well be less about dietary restriction and more about an antispeciesist ethic, a shift from vegetarianism to veganism might allow for productive growth.

Heather, the author of the blog *For the Love of Kale*, discusses the ways that she has had to dissociate her veganism from her past eating disorder, noting that "when one chooses to become vegan, one inherently chooses to become a victim of criticism. If one chooses to adopt a vegan lifestyle after battling an eating disorder (as I did), the criticism and backlash multiplies tenfold." For Heather, becoming vegan was a step toward recovery: "Many thought I was adopting veganism as a means of keeping myself from gaining weight—sort of like an extension of my eating disorder. *The reality is, for the first time in my life, I felt like veganism was saving me from my eating disorder because I was choosing a lifestyle that was trying to choose me all along*" ("Disassociating," emphasis in original). Heather's experience and her decision to study nutrition and fitness have provided her with the tools necessary to overcome a history of self-starvation. Feeling that Heather and I could not be unique, I posted a call on H-Animal, an online forum that "aims to serve as an on-line home for scholars across disciplines who are engaged in the study of animals in human culture," for other personal accounts of veganism's connection to eating disorders in order to test my hypothesis that veganism might actually assist some women in a recovery from anorexia and bulimia. The response was impressive. I do not claim to have undertaken a quantitative study of the ways that veganism might actually work in the service of healing the eating-disordered

body, and I have not examined the possibilities that when veganism and vegetarianism are linked to eating disorders, the linkage is the result of a problem with the definition of those terms. But I offer the following narratives from people who argue—very compellingly—that in their own lives, these scenarios have certainly been the case.

The Dead Body,
by Jacqueline J. Morr

Jacqueline J. Morr is an MA candidate at the Gallatin School for Individualized Study at New York University.

In the summer of my twentieth year I started running. I worked my way up from just a half mile to one to three, four miles. Come the end of August I was running between four and five miles every day and, as part of my new "healthful" lifestyle, had reduced my daily caloric intake to a lean twelve hundred, no-more-no-less. A month or so before then I'd begun eating roughly the same thing for each meal: cereal with skim milk and water for breakfast; a peanut-butter sandwich on reduced-calorie bread and salad with fat-free dressing and water for lunch; and a super-sized salad, fat-free dressing (often balsamic), and boneless, skinless, lean cuts of chicken or tuna for dinner, with water to help it all down. No deviations, no extras. I had truly never felt so energized, or as clean or fit, in my entire life. The day before I was set to move back onto campus for the start of my sophomore year I sheared my hair just short enough so it couldn't be called a buzz; and when I arrived at my new apartment my three roommates, who'd met me for the first time at the tail-end of the last school year and hadn't seen or heard from me since, had no idea who the fuck I was. Four months, twenty pounds, and ten inches of hair had, *poof*, disappeared, and I was blissfully nascent. Two months later I'd have my first binge. Another two and I was gorging and starving myself in clockwork fashion and flitting through attacks of depression and rage so severe that I would sometimes vomit involuntarily at the side of the road. It wasn't until that spring that I felt I'd gone wrong, that things were amiss. One night in March or April I called my mother, bawling. *What's the matter?* she'd asked. I wailed into the receiver. *Mom*, I gasped, *I can't sleep. I think I have an eating disorder.*

So it was for the entirety of my undergraduate years: restrict, binge, repeat, repeat, repeat, wait for blankness, tend the void, repeat. All the while I saw a therapist in my hometown and also sat for weekly talking-sessions with a school counselor who once asked if I'd ever meditated and, if so, had I ever heard of whale-songs on compact disc? But the changes were too slow, too little. In February of 2010 I self-admitted to an inpatient facility in Philadelphia, self-assured that they could reteach me how to eat, sleep, think straight.

There, in the institution, a new resolve to abstain from meat took on meaning beyond that of calorie or fat restriction. The smell of it disgusted me for the first time; the sight of it brought me near to retching, and despite my nutritionist's claims I knew that meat eating was hardly the only way to procure "good" fats and "complex" proteins (I had been reading obsessively about food and nutritional content for more than two years). Beyond this, and perhaps more significantly, my voluntary hospitalization had me thinking about *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *Girl, Interrupted*—everything was the same, from the hospital gowns to the queue for pills to, yes, the sick people, *us*, predictably disheveled and working through our own singular violences. Languorous, we milled around, seeking some respite or purpose beyond ourselves.

After some weeks in residential treatment I realized that I loathed meat just as I loathed my own body: for its softness, its blood, its warmth, its noiselessness. It meant dying. It meant excess (like my bingeing, like my too-low breasts and the malleable skin of my stomach and the fat of my hips) and lack (a loss of control, a reiteration of my *femininity* as my *pathology*). Alongside my consistent progress and striving for recovery this morbid identification intensified, evolving from sporadic disgust to prolonged, attentive horror—not only was my body *like* this dead body, this flesh-as-food, but it *was* this dead body. How I'd never seen it before I do not know: the thinnest of us cadaver-like and loitering in the corners of the day room, eyes turned downward or clouded or perpetually closed, withered arms hanging stiffly at their sides like broken branches, stubbornly devouring themselves like I had. So near to death. *Death itself*. And in the same way that cows become beef and pigs become ham do girls and women too often metamorphose into the eating-disordered, the socially inept, the anorectic and the bulimic, the patient. Through the completion of my treatment and my first months of reentry into society I brooded. At the onset of recovery I committed myself to vegetarianism straightaway (I fully acknowledge that, beyond ethical reasoning, this was also done in the hopes of affecting my "fitness" and body-shape, in conjunction with my refusal to quit running—so long as I did so responsibly). About a month before the one-year anniversary of my release from the hospital I moved to Chicago and fully transitioned to veganism, a task made somewhat easier with help from my vegan husband-to-be and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Eating Animals*.

I write this from my white-walled apartment in Brooklyn, two years and eight months posthospitalization, and I am resolutely the healthiest, happiest, and most self-aware I've ever been. As I've shunned tolerance for the language and practices of subjection that classified me first as female, then as feminine, then, as circumstance made it, as *eating-disordered* or *ill* or *sick*, I've remodeled

my life into that of an ethical, abolitionist vegan. For my graduate thesis-work I am writing a book of my own, a book detailing the unraveling of my own eating disorder, a book about bodies.

We—the animal and I—are chosen, fixed and invested with purpose, constructed as things to devour and be devoured. Objects for and of consumption. To tolerate speciesism is to tolerate sexism is to consent to the obliteration of subjective agency (for eating-disordered women, for farmed animals). What else can I do but to use my voice, my words, to rectify these atrocities? *No more silence.*

Open Heart, Full Plate: How Veganism Healed My Disordered Eating, by Melissa Tedrow

> Melissa Tedrow is on the writing faculty at the University of Denver and holds a PhD in English from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

In a recurrent dream I am standing before a cornucopia from which tumbles a harvest of time. Full, ripe years; savory months; bittersweet clusters of moments. *What will I do with such bounty?* I wonder, a coercive smile on my face and an ease spreading from my core to my outstretched limbs. Possibilities parade before me, until another voice lowers the boom. *You will do nothing with any of those hours*, the voice intones. *You gave them all away and you never will get them back.*

That's right. Whole decades of my life spent hating my body. Unrecoverable.

Like many women, my body dystopia started early in life. At age thirteen I knew that if I stood on the edge of our bathtub, the mirror over the sink would reflect an exact cross-section of my upper thighs. Morning and night throughout my teens I held fast to the shower curtain rod and rotated before that mirror, adjudicating what I saw. This daily ritual and its variations (the "pinch an inch" test, anyone?) continued into my twenties, then thirties, as did my increasingly monitored eating. The ivy-covered college I attended served up the most wholesome, life-supporting meals, and what did I offer my body? Carefully rationed bagel pieces, portions logged in a notebook beside my bed.

I was aware of what I was doing those many years, knew what a gargantuan waste it was, when the sun was shining on a pumpkin-warm autumn Saturday, to stay hunched over my desk diagramming weight-loss plans or recalculating my body mass index. I understood that there were better ways I could be spending my "one wild and precious life," to quote the poet Mary Oliver. Writing, taking up photography, and coaching middle school soccer

all came to mind, and I did take a stab at such activities. But the life I was living was a shell of its promise, and I was a prisoner inside it. No matter how many feminist theory classes I took or counselors I approached, I couldn't exorcise the inner demons that ruled a day "good" or "bad" based on how much of my own ass-flesh I could grab before walking out the door.

Just when I started giving up—presuming that this soul-sapping obsession would be my companion for life—the pages started turning.

I'd always been a reader, but starting in my early thirties the content of my reading coalesced in ways that it hadn't before. Entranced by the mirror as I long had been, I understood that there were more dire problems in the world than my jean size—problems like global hunger, environmental destruction, and animal cruelty. These problems seemed more urgent as time passed and my consciousness grew; I began searching for answers in the material I was reading for my graduate coursework, then increasingly on my own. To my surprise, an overwhelming number of writers, representing a broad cross section of disciplinary expertise, agreed that the world's ailments could be alleviated or even healed if more people adopted a plant-based diet.

It didn't take long before I realized what I needed and wanted to do, but how in the world to begin? The only vegan I knew was my sister, who swore off animal products briefly in high school, right around the time she also adopted a Sanskrit name and dyed her blonde hair purple-black. I remember her eating too much Rice Dream and my parents' relief when she abandoned "that phase." All the while I had been training myself to treat food as the enemy and therefore, not surprisingly, possessed neither grace nor dexterity in the kitchen. But I wasn't stupid: I knew that if I chose to go vegan, people would be watching, the way we all watch each other around food. I also knew what everyone thought of plant-based living based on my sister's enactment of it. My way would have to be different.

That's when the miracles started happening. Haltingly at first, a few recipes here and there, I began teaching myself to cook. I also gradually removed eating from the isolation chamber, hosting weekly dinners for friends, baking seasonal pies for my family, and sharing recipes with colleagues. Slowly but surely cooking bloomed into a passion as authentic and abiding as any I've ever known. Now I feel off-kilter after a few days away from a ladle; I follow and occasionally contribute to several cooking blogs; and I have been contemplating cooking school. But the most striking development, at least from my perspective? I now eat with balance and joy.

That's the main point of this tale: my veganism may have been inspired by exterior motives—a wish to diminish suffering and inspire others to do the same—but it's transformed me on a deeply personal level. Today I nourish myself unselfconsciously, my body fixation reduced to an occasional faint echo from the past. Far more than a dietary or lifestyle choice, or even a form

of activism, veganism has been the gateway to full-hearted living that I always wanted but never could access.

As I write this essay, my partner and I are remodeling our kitchen. I have hopes of teaching cooking classes there, for brand-new vegans, once the remodel is done. My long-term dream is to open a small cooking school on several acres of land. I can picture this place clearly: sprawling fruit and vegetable gardens, plenty of space for former farmed animals to roam free. The cooking classes happen in a reconditioned barn, outfitted with a state-of-the-art kitchen and long wooden tables. People gather for writing and cooking retreats; together we heal our bodies and souls, and celebrate life.

No, I never will recapture the time that I lost, but my cornucopia holds new possibilities. I will harvest what lies ahead.

The Weight of Veganism, by Corey Wrenn

> Corey Wrenn is an adjunct professor in the Liberal Arts Department at Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design in Denver, Colorado, and an instructor in the Sociology Department at Colorado State University in Fort Collins.

After having been vegetarian since I was thirteen, I went vegan at age seventeen, back when my metabolism was high and weight was never an issue. I am five feet, nine inches, and at the time, I was a slender 130 pounds. Perhaps it was the "Freshman 15," or the fact that I was consuming more carbohydrates than I had previously been, but by the end of college, I was up to 145. And, now that I'm getting close to thirty, I've been hovering between 155 and 160, and my brother jokingly asks if I'm pregnant. So I never really equated veganism with eating disorders; such a notion was opposite to my own experience.

However, in graduate school, I befriended another student who was "vegan." By this time, animal-rights activism had become central to my life and my research, and I found that my friend and I were often butting heads. If she was vegan, why did she just buy those leather boots? Why was she still using nonvegan makeup? Both of us being single, we often went to the bars together on the weekends. But there was something not quite right about my friend: within a couple of hours, she would become so heavily intoxicated that she had trouble standing. Before I knew it, I would have to walk her home, making sure she didn't fall down (which she often did) and that she was safe. I suspected it was because she was a petite woman and the alcohol got to her quickly.

However, one night after the bars closed, we stopped by a 7-Eleven to buy snacks for the walk home. I got a bag of potato chips, but my friend got a

taquito. A taquito? Well, the truth had come out. She wasn't vegan for ethical reasons, she was vegan, as she put it, to manage her weight. This meant she "cheated" from time to time. And the reason she would get so dangerously drunk on our excursions? She was running many miles every day and also starving herself. Many of those nights, her only calorie intake would be shots of liquor and pints of beer.

I am very aware of the stereotypes against vegans: we are supposed to be pale, thin, and sickly. When I am accused of such, I often jokingly grab my gut and give it a wobble, "Do I look malnourished to you?" It usually gets a laugh. But I was seriously never aware of any eating disorder associated with veganism until my experiences with my friend and later my research into vegan and vegetarian literature. Looking back on those experiences today, my perspective is distinctly more critical.

Considering that our animal-rights movement invests so much of its resources and claims making into pushing veganism as a means of achieving a healthy and attractive weight, it really is no surprise to me that some might adopt veganism for the wrong reasons. When groups like PETA, which is the face of animal rights, post billboards near Florida beaches depicting overweight women and exclaiming, "Save the whales!" body image absolutely becomes the central issue. Nothing good can come of promoting veganism through the ridicule of women's bodies. Alternatively, when PETA insists on promoting its messages through the display of naked, sexualized female bodies, again, veganism is associated with an unrealistic body image that can seemingly be achieved if one simply goes vegan.

So while I often counter criticisms about the inadequacies of the vegan diet by assuring the querent, "I actually *gained* weight after going vegan!" I do have to consider how modern media images of sexualized, thin, youthful women are impacting a generation of women who feel they need to achieve that ideal. When groups like PETA promote veganism as a means of achieving it, I really have cause for concern. While veganism, for me, is completely unrelated to healthy living and diet (I am an ethical abolitionist vegan), I really cannot rule out the role of mainstream animal-rights organizations in actively manipulating female insecurities to promote their message. Not only was it dangerous for my friend, but it is disastrous to womankind in general. But also, a serious call for equality and justice is being lost in the message. Objectifying women in hopes of ending the objectification of nonhumans can only fail. It can only cause more suffering. Veganism is deeply rooted in ethical considerations for vulnerable populations, but this is silenced in distractions from women's advocates and nutritionists. This recent body image co-optation, actively cultivated by manipulative animal-rights organizations and supported by naive and desperate young women, is unfortunate indeed.

Anorexia and Veganism: My Story, by Justin Van Kleeck

Justin Van Kleeck has a PhD in English but left academia in part to work on veganism, the environment, and other social issues. He is a freelance writer who, with his wife, Rosemary, recently founded Triangle Chance for All (http://trianglechanceforall.org), a nonprofit organization that runs a small "microsanctuary" for rescued farmed animals and promotes ethical veganism. Justin and Rosemary are working to build the Microsanctuary Movement (www.facebook.com/microsanctuarymovement) in order to help inspire others to use what resources they can to provide sanctuary to animals in need. Despite all of that, Justin is an extreme and unapologetic introvert.

What I remember most about my childhood years, especially my years in school, is feeling different because I was overweight. The jokes and snide comments from my peers were, of course, the most obvious indicators that I was a bad person. But there are so many other, subtler signs that I am sure anyone in a similar position has felt.

This sort of awareness, at least for the sensitive among us, breeds a depressingly neurotic, obsessive self-criticism that often flowers into full-blown self-loathing.

And that was my mental and emotional state by high school. One of the clearest memories I have is of a period in which I would repeat, like a mantra, "I will get thin," as I lay in bed trying to go to sleep.

Admittedly, as a male who was both a good student and a good athlete, living with my father in a single-parent household, it may seem strange that my weight was always and inevitably such an issue. But it was, and I hated myself for it with every fiber of my being.

It was something of a miracle (to me), then, when my appetite suddenly disappeared during my junior year of high school. I did not eat anything for several days, and afterward my entire relationship to food changed.

I realized for the first time that I could control both food and, more importantly (or so I thought), my body. I started eating strictly healthy foods, exercising a lot, and monitoring my weight.

I had topped out at 265 pounds. Eleven months later, when I came back from summer break for my senior year of high school, I was 135 pounds lighter. Friends I had known since middle school walked right by me in the hallway. Though I felt like absolute garbage—I could not walk up to the school's second story without losing my vision and needing to support myself for a moment to regain my senses—I had a rush of pride and satisfaction at having become, in a way, a new person.

My anorexia manifested as severe food restriction for a couple of years, allowing me to shake off weight like it was an oversized coat. After a hospitalization and extensive counseling, I managed to get away and go to college. My weight went up and down, but I eventually stopped seeing any counselors and was left to my own devices. I also went vegan at this time after reading a pamphlet about animal agriculture (I had been vegetarian for two years before this point) and finally refusing to cause unnecessary suffering to other living beings through my diet and other choices. During my later years in college, I also lost more weight (though I was eating regularly), reaching a nadir of 114 pounds shortly before graduation.

A PhD program at a different university was a massive undertaking, but I managed to juggle depression, anorexia, and an extensive course load, as well as an unwavering commitment to veganism, for all five years of the program. (A second hospitalization along the way was merely a speed bump.) It was habitual by that point, and I got so used to how my body felt while not eating enough that none of the minor issues fazed me. Indeed, feeling deprived and exhausted seemed justifiable to my self-loathing mind; I only got worried when I started to feel in any way good.

Things got genuinely scary for me only once. It was after graduate school, and I was working as a residential staff member at a massage therapy school in northern California during high-desert season. The climate was absolutely draining, and I could not stay nourished or hydrated enough to keep up. My condition deteriorated to the point that I could not walk up hills, and I spent the weekends in a near-coma in my room.

It is a frightful thing to look in the mirror and see Death looking back at you—to see that it has taken over you, has become you.

I left California and returned to the east coast to recuperate. I cannot say that the California experience changed things immediately, but I do believe it was a personal bottoming out that allowed me to slowly crawl back up to something resembling well-being.

There is no single thing I can point to as central to my ability to live with anorexia. (I do not say "recover," because it is always there. My relationships with food and my body are always tinged with the hues of anorexia, though it has become easier to not be blinded by them.) But I can say for certain that my ethical veganism was helpful in this growth.

My veganism was (and is) fully informed by a recognition that I am not the center of things but only one small part. Veganism helped me to have something important to work on and be a part of through advocacy and activism. It was also crucial that I met another vegan who became my partner (and my wife) and that the two of us have undertaken so many projects on behalf of animals—be it caring for our big family of rescues, starting a sanctuary and education organization for farmed animals, or organizing events and classes

to promote a vegan lifestyle. I have, finally, been able to focus on so many more important things than myself and my neuroses by dedicating myself to an active, engaged life as a vegan.

Now I look at the fifteen or so years that I was in the grip of my mind's stranglehold as an important part of my growth as a person. My eating disorder started before my veganism, but I know without question that the latter is not contingent upon the former. My veganism is a result of my inability to accept that others should suffer so that I might live. It has nothing to do with dieting, restricting food, or controlling what and how much I allow myself to consume.

My veganism is bigger and more central to who I am than anorexia. Rather than veganism being a manifestation of a disorder, I am certain that veganism has been a crucial way for me to find balance and well-being in my own life while also motivating me to make a difference in the lives of others.

Final Thoughts

I am Laura Wright, a middle-class white woman from North Carolina, a state that on May 8, 2012, became the thirty-first to pass an amendment making same-sex marriage constitutionally illegal.[3] According to a *New York Times* article about North Carolina that appeared three days after the passage of Amendment One (the ambiguous and broad text of which reads: "Marriage between one man and one woman is the only domestic legal union that shall be valid or recognized in this State"), "social and religious conservatism and economic populism have historically gone hand-in-hand in a state that, for many decades, consisted largely of small farms and mill towns. Thus in a state that became known for first-rate universities, it was illegal to buy a cocktail for most of the 20th century." In other words, I exist—and have existed for the majority of my life—in a state (literal and in many ways figurative) of problematic socially ascribed contradictions, a place that, despite its many forward-thinking actions, enacts codified and tacit rules that disenfranchise members of its populace. I have lived elsewhere, in Massachusetts and New York, and I could argue, I suppose, that things were clearer and less muddled there. But I've come back to North Carolina, and it is from within that literal state and its engagement with these various states of being that I continually seek to enact a vegan feminist social activism. But first things first.

1. I have an early memory of asking my mother why "he" was the universal pronoun. I didn't use the phrase "universal pronoun," but I was conscious at about age five of the fact that "he" was used to mean male or female. Things have changed since then; I am neither young nor exceptionally old, but old enough to remember being a child prior to "they" entering

the mainstream lexicon as both singular and gender neutral; at one point, we were all "he."[4]

2. When I was thirteen, my class took a field trip to a fellow classmate's father's sausage-processing plant. I never ate sausage again.
3. At the age of nineteen, I stopped eating just about everything.
4. A graduate school colleague of mine was beaten within an inch of her life by her ex-spouse, a man against whom she had a restraining order. The day before he broke into her house and savaged her, he came to her house and killed her dog. This was the second incident of which I was aware where the mistreatment of a companion animal preceded violence against a woman. The first happened several years earlier, in 1991. My parents' friends' daughter, Nan Schiffman, was brutally murdered by two men who had worked on a paint crew at her house. One of the men had done something to her dog, and she had complained to the men's employers. The men abducted, raped, and murdered Nan, burying her body at an abandoned farm.[5]

To my mind, these experiences are all about arbitrary and contradictory rules that are gender specific, about consumption, and about violent control. They are all, as well—and this is something I can only see now, in retrospect—about restoring Carol J. Adams's absent referent. To reiterate and expound: I come from contradictory circumstances, a state both liberal and conservative, a family both permissive and dictatorial, the daughter to a father who treated me, in many ways, like the son he likely wished I was but who always came up against his beliefs that girls and women should occupy certain confining spaces. So here's the rub: as a teenager, I could drive a tractor and I knew a lot about cars, but if I swore or stayed out late, I'd get in trouble.

I was expected to be smart and pretty, and that was for me an impossible balance, to be cognizant of all the reasons why being pretty was a trap, to be able to articulate those reasons, and to be held to those expectations nonetheless. To hold myself to them and to punish myself for not adhering to either piece of the equation of beauty and brains. Hegemony is, after all, rule by consent. Oh, and I was expected to eat meat. To be pretty and smart in the South in the 1970s and 1980s, for me at least, was to disappear, to make myself absent. To absent myself—my body—already rhetorically absent in the universalizing pronouncement of "he," via an eating disorder that overtook my life for over a decade.

I don't remember my mother's answer to the question about the universal pronoun, or maybe she didn't have an answer, having always just accepted as truth the fact that femaleness, in the abstraction of generalization, simply ceased to exist, simply disappeared in the crush of overwhelming masculin-

ity.[6] But to this day I remember raising the question, knowing that there was some injustice in the negation, even as I grew more and more acquainted with what it meant to be negated. And that knowledge stuck.

When I went on that class trip to the sausage plant several years later, I'd already asked my poor parents a second question: Where does meat come from? Did the animals die naturally before we ate them, or were they killed? Again, I don't remember the answer, probably, this time, because whatever I was told proved woefully untrue in the blinding glare of the truths revealed to me that day in the processing plant. Lessons learned and then discarded: "he" is the universal pronoun because *it is*. Animals are violently killed and I eat them because *I do*. And then I didn't anymore, at least not those animals, at least not pigs, whose bodies I'd seen hung on hooks, gutted and waiting to be processed. Never those animals. Never again. Sausage was pigs, real, once-living pigs, the bodies of which were bigger than I was, the eyes of which, on that day, stared at me out of dead sockets. I started using "she" as my universal pronoun thereafter as well; I lost points on papers for doing so. I was consistently corrected, all the way through my undergraduate studies. I never stopped.[7]

When I went to college, I became a vegetarian, fully and completely, and I started running. I lived in Boone, North Carolina, a tiny town at the time, where nothing bad ever happened. I ran on backcountry roads; I ran at night. Running made me feel free. I was able to eschew eating some meat—sausage, for example—while I lived with my parents, but I couldn't make a case for not eating any meat without getting in trouble at home. My life up until that point had been, at least from the time I was about thirteen until I left at eighteen, a struggle to gain some semblance of control of my body and intellect from my parents, who—with what I have no doubt were the best of intentions—continually wrested control away from me in their attempts to protect and care for me. Such circumstances are not unusual; I was the elder of two daughters, the one upon whom they had experimented, as parents must, with *how* to parent. They were by turns loving, demanding, and incredibly rigid; I, in turn, was perfectionistic, overachieving, and often profoundly angry.

The power struggles between my parents and me were more often than not about my body: what I wore, how my hair looked, how far my stomach protruded and why I didn't hold it in, as was more appropriate for a girl of my upbringing. Undoubtedly, then, food became for me, as it is for many girls like me, both an enemy and a weapon; food was by turns a catalyst for unseemly and inappropriate appetites that threatened to overwhelm me and alternately something that I could resist, the concrete substance through which I demonstrated my will and strength. Not eating was a paradoxical act of control, one that enabled my first clear acts of defiance even as doing so undermined my health and sanity.

The problem, at least initially, is that I wasn't sure what I was defying. But to be clear: becoming a vegetarian when I went to college and asserting that identity when I went home to visit my family was a manifestation of an awareness that was fomented by that visit to the sausage plant years before, that animals that become meat suffer and die to feed us. I became a vegetarian out of a desire not to participate in that suffering, but my vegetarianism also served as an assertion of my own identity and an affront to my parents, who didn't know what to do with or how to feed a vegetarian daughter and who took understandable offense at what they viewed as a rejection of their care, their nourishment, and their heritage.

I am well aware of the ways that women use vegetarianism as an excuse to cut things out of their diets, and there is a significant body of research on this subject, as chronicled and detailed by my colleague and friend Hal Herzog on his blog at *Psychology Today*.[8] What some research would seem to indicate is that women cut meat out of their diets to lose weight; they claim to be vegetarian in order to make an excuse for not eating certain things. In this light, being a "vegetarian" is divorced from its ethical implications and becomes a way to mask disordered eating. Hal notes an interview he conducted for his recent book *Some We Love, Some We Hate, Some We Eat: Why It Is So Hard to Think Straight about Animals*: a woman claimed that "she became a vegetarian when she was a teenager. Then she dropped the bombshell: 'My vegetarianism was tied up with my eating disorder.'"

My vegetarianism was likewise tied up with the eating disorder that fully manifested itself around 1989, but I think that for women who find themselves in such circumstances, the connections between these two things—vegetarianism and eating disorders—are much more complicated than simply one serving as an excuse for the other. I know that in my case this reality is a profound truth. Not eating meat made sense to me, and I was not eating meat for ethical reasons; I have never doubted that reality. But along with not eating meat, I was left with a void with regard to *how* to eat thereafter; essentially, I was left without resources to enable one great leap in terms of my consciousness with regard to a kind of care for nonhuman animals—my vegetarianism—to translate into self-care that could nourish and sustain a position that felt so unfamiliar and, in many ways, unsafe to me.

If at nineteen I was aware on some visceral level—and I was—of a kind of erasure of women and animals via tricks of language that render them absent, then I was not yet aware of the connections between such rhetorical violence and actual violence done to animals and women. I had no roadmap for making those connections (*The Sexual Politics of Meat* was still a year from publication, and I didn't discover it or read other ecofeminist texts for another decade) or for knowing how to assert an alternative and independent female identity, no matter how much I wanted to do so. In the space of being a veg-

etarian whose prior existence had been predicated on the eating of meat and of being a fledgling feminist whose prior attempts at self-assertion had been effectively quelled, deemed inappropriate, and that I had internalized as the source of doubt and guilt, I found myself shuttling between a positive sense of self-assertion ("eating animals is wrong") and a negative internalization of learned helplessness ("so what do I do now?"). I started, quite literally this time, to disappear. And then women around me, women I knew, women who were independent and self-actualized, disappeared as well.

A TIMELINE:

1989: I become a vegetarian. And Jeni Gray is abducted from the same sidewalk where I run every day in Boone, North Carolina. She is found raped and murdered two weeks later. Daniel Brian Lee, the man who killed her, abducts another woman, Leigh Cooper Wallace—a fellow college student and runner like me—again from my running loop and rapes her.[9] She escapes and identifies him. He dies of a brain aneurysm in prison several years later.

1991: Steven Bishop and Kenny Kaiser rape and murder Nan Schiffman after she complains to their employers about their treatment of her dog.

1992: I graduate from Appalachian State University with a BA in English and start graduate study at East Carolina University, where I write an MA thesis on Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, a novel about a young Shona woman named Tambu who goes to live with her English-educated relatives. At one point in the novel, Tambu's mother lashes out at her "Englishness," admonishing her, "If you are so greedy you would betray your own mother for meat, then go to your [aunt] Maiguru. She will give you meat. I will survive on vegetables as we all used to do" (141). Tambu's cousin, Maiguru's daughter Nyasha, develops an eating disorder, caught as she is between her English upbringing and her Shona culture (one defined by a diet based on meat and the other by a diet based on vegetables), the weight of European and Shona patriarchal standards, and the conflicting expectations of her father that she be an "intelligent girl but . . . also develop into a good woman . . . not seeing any contradiction in this" (88). When Nyasha's parents take her to a psychiatrist, he negates her condition, telling her family that "Africans did not suffer in the way that they had described. She was making a scene" (201).

1993: My graduate school colleague's ex-husband kills her dog and then returns the next day to brutally beat her.

I started work on my PhD in English at the University of Massachusetts in 1999, the same year that South African author (and later Nobel laureate) J.

M. Coetzee published two works, neither of which I read until several years later. The first, *The Lives of Animals*, constitutes his 1997–98 Princeton Tanner Lectures, a text that consisted of two narratives about the fictional novelist Elizabeth Costello's animal-rights lectures at fictional Appleton College. Over the course of the first lecture, she compares the slaughter of animals in industrialized societies to the slaughter of Jews during the Holocaust. The second, *Disgrace*, is a novel set in postapartheid South Africa about, among other things, the rape of Lucy Lurie, a white, lesbian, vegetarian South African woman, by three black South African men who also shoot and kill the dogs that she kennels. Lucy's father, the disgraced former university English professor David Lurie, forced from his job after a questionably consensual sexual relationship with one of his undergraduate female students, moves in with Lucy prior to the attack—during which Lucy's rapists douse him with flammable liquid and set him on fire. These two works, in their attention to animal-rights issues, are often considered companion pieces of a sort, and they, along with other Coetzee novels, became the basis for the dissertation that later turned into my first monograph, *Writing "Out of All the Camps": J. M. Coetzee's Narratives of Displacement* (Routledge, 2006).

By 2001 I had gotten a grip on my eating disorder, but it had not fully abated, despite years of hard work. When I found Carol J. Adams's *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, I read it over the course of two days. When I was finished, I felt that someone had finally articulated for me all the missing connections that then allowed me to make sense of the disjointed narrative of my previous experiences with regard to animals, eating, women, and violence. I decided very soon thereafter—and largely in response to my internalization of Adams's argument—that one of the most feminist things I could do would be to become vegan, so I did.[10] This choice was not linked to an eating disorder; I was able to link this one to a recovery of sorts: my husband, Jason, had always said—and rightly—that I wasn't really a very good vegetarian; he called me a "meat avoider," because I wasn't really doing anything other than simply avoiding meat.

Being a vegetarian, he said, meant eating *vegetables*. As a vegetarian, I ate lots of carbohydrates (not that there's a thing wrong with carbohydrates, but that was pretty much all that I ate) and not many vegetables—and I ate a lot of processed junk. Remember: just because something is "vegetarian" doesn't necessarily mean that it's good for you. At that time, I hadn't really cared about what was good for me; I just knew that I didn't want to eat animals. This time around, becoming vegan, I made a conscious choice to eat more fully and to eat better, to consume things that would make me healthy and strong, to eat food that was fresh, whole, and not processed. The goal was as much one of self-empowerment as animal liberation—and because the connections between those two things were now clear to me, I was able to be

empowered by this choice. Becoming vegan, in its most feminist manifestation, meant doing something actively in response to a cultural stasis that dictated dietary behavior with which I simply did not agree. This time around, I was reacting in ways that felt fully conscious, and that consciousness has allowed me to eat—and live—more and better than I ever did before.

Since its codification as a category distinct from vegetarianism, veganism has embodied and continues to embody a profound paradox, at once concerned with the preservation of and a respect for all forms of life, even as vegans, like everyone and everything else, are participants in the cycle of life and death. What I hope is clear at the end of the study is the way that that paradox is the product of a perpetually shifting culture that continues to construct divergent and contradictory national and personal narratives about its history, politics, health benefits, and ethical consideration. Veganism, as identity and dietary practice, became increasingly visible in complex, often problematic ways after 9/11, particularly as the nation has sought to reframe itself and its story in the age of terror. Vegan identity is deeply invested in and embroiled with the stories we tell ourselves about nonhuman animals, our beliefs about gender, race, and sexual orientation, and our conceptions of nationalism, Americanness, and good and evil. I do not imagine that our picture of veganism will be any less complex, contradictory, or unified in the future, but my hope is that this project helps place veganism within a social and historical context that will allow for a greater understanding of its increasing impact—in whatever form that impact may take.

NOTES

Introduction. Framing Vegan Studies

1. Lisa became vegetarian in 1995, during the show's seventh season.

2. It is important to distinguish between these two positions. "Animal welfare" constitutes an advocacy position that seeks to reduce suffering in the lives of animals prior to their being rendered consumable objects. Such a position works to advocate from within extant systems. "Animal rights," on the other hand, is an advocacy position that seeks to extend rights to animals, up to and including the inherent right to life. An animal-rights position is a radical stance that seeks to overturn extant systems, not work within them.

3. McCance also includes in her introduction to critical animal studies a section on cultural studies, art, architecture, and literature in which she notes that such media constitute the opening of the field of critical animal studies to broader multidisciplinary analysis.

4. Warkentin is speaking specifically about Gary Steiner, who made this proclamation at the 2011 New York University Animal Studies Initiative.

5. Consider Joseph Conrad's Kurtz, who, after having succumbed to the "heart of darkness" in the Congo, writes that he wants to "exterminate all the brutes!"

6. For how this assertion has played out, see Carlassare; Gaard, "Ecofeminism Revisited."

7. See Estok 71 for a discussion of this omission.

8. Adams and I discussed this issue via email on May 18, 2013.

9. With thanks to Elizabeth Kucinich for telling me about this website when we discussed my book over ice cream at Plant Restaurant in September 2012.

10. Many cage-fighting discussion boards host numerous postings from people who doubt Danzig could acquire his physique without meat.

Chapter 1. Tracing the Discourse of Veganism in Post-9/11 U.S. Culture

1. James Carroll wrote in 2004 of Bush's use of the term "crusade": "George W. Bush plumbed the deepest place in himself, looking for a simple expression of what the assaults of September 11 required. It was his role to lead the nation, and the very world. The President, at a moment of crisis, defines the communal response. A few days after the assault, George W. Bush did this. Speaking spontaneously, without the aid of advisers or speechwriters, he put a word on the new American purpose that both shaped it and gave it meaning. 'This crusade,' he said, 'this war on terrorism.'"

2. There are numerous forums that discuss the intersection of veganism and race. See, for example, the work of A. Breeze Harper, particularly her blog, *The Sistah Vegan Project*; her edited collection; *Sistah Vegan: Black Female Vegans Speak*; and her essay "Going Beyond the Normative White 'Post-Racial' Vegan Epistemology."

3. Veganism as a healthy dietary alternative has been popularized and given

credence by such studies as T. Colin Campbell and Thomas M. Campbell II, *The China Study* (2006).

4. The Iacobbos' book is unique among the three vegetarian histories discussed in this chapter in its attention to the profound role that women have played throughout the evolution of a vegetarian and vegan consciousness.

5. The pyramid was revised in 2005 and eliminated in 2011. It has been replaced with an icon called "My Plate."

6. The case was dismissed in 1998.

7. For an analysis of some of the most controversial aspects of the Patriot Act, see Larry Abramson and Maria Godoy's analysis for NPR.

8. As Robert Schlesinger notes, "Despite what you might have heard, a 13-story mosque is not going to be built at ground zero in lower Manhattan. For that matter, a 13-story mosque is not going to be built within a few blocks of ground zero. Rather a 13-story building is going up which will contain, among other things, a mosque."

9. Bourdain has tended to focus on vegan and vegetarian arguments about the health-supportive nature of those diets and on what he views as a kind of cultural elitism that keeps vegans from being able to travel to other cultures and eat their foods. He has tended to stay away from the ethical arguments for veganism.

10. And while the numbers have declined since 2001, in 2010 the number of anti-Muslim hate crimes was 160—up 50 percent from 2009 (Southern Poverty Law Center).

11. "Paul Carroll" is the alias of a young man who wished to remain anonymous.

Chapter 2. Vegan Vampires

1. An MLA search for *Dracula* on June 8, 2011, pulled 677 articles.

2. Stavick notes Harker's notations about what he eats. For example, on the first page of the novel, Harker comments that he eats "a chicken done up some way with red pepper, which was very good" (Stoker 11), and later he consumes "egg-plant stuffed with forcemeat, a very excellent dish" (12).

3. Carol J. Adams has written about meat's heterosexual, masculinist connotations in *The Sexual Politics of Meat*. She notes that "people with power have always eaten meat. The aristocracy of Europe consumed large courses filled with every kind of meat while the laborer consumed complex carbohydrates. Dietary habits proclaim class distinctions, but they proclaim patriarchal distinctions as well. Women, second-class citizens, are more likely to eat what are considered to be second-class foods in a patriarchal culture: vegetables, fruits, and grains rather than meat" (48). For an example of a "queer" reading, see Dee Amy-Chinn's reading of Spike as queer in "Queering the Bitch."

4. *Slayage* is edited by Rhonda V. Wilcox and David Lavery. To name a few such works: David Lavery and Rhonda V. Wilcox, eds., *Fighting the Forces: What's at Stake in Buffy the Vampire Slayer?* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002); James B. South and William Irwin, eds., *Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Philosophy: Fear and Trembling in Sunnydale* (Chicago: Open Court, 2003); and Kevin K. Durand, ed., *Buffy Meets the Academy: Essays on the Episodes and Scripts as Texts* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2009).

5. According to the *Fan History Wiki*, this term predates 1998.

6. I say "seemingly" because he appears on *Angel* thereafter.

7. Willow repeatedly refers to Angel as a "puppy" throughout the episode.

8. Despite the fact that the episode indicates, at least initially, that Cordelia will be its protagonist, she is killed by Xander and Willow almost immediately after entering this alternate universe.

9. "Doublemeat Palace" is consistently listed as one of the worst *BtVS* episodes of

all time on several review sites, including one by Keith McDuffy on *Huffpost TV* and one by Daniel Erenhert on *Slayage*.

10. One might be inclined to wonder why one would want to hold a regular job and attend high school if one did not have to do so.

11. A particularly apt analysis of this abuse narrative can be found in John Scott Lewinski's November 24, 2009, post on Wired.com entitled "Top 20 Unfortunate Lessons Girls Learn from *Twilight*." Lesson 4 reads as follows: "If a boy tells you to stay away from him because he is dangerous and may even kill you, he must be the love of your life. You should stay with him since he will keep you safe forever." Lesson 14 states: "If the boy you are in love with causes you (even indirectly) to be so badly beaten you end up in the hospital, you should tell the doctors and your family that you 'fell down the steps' because you are such a silly, clumsy girl. That false explanation always works well for abused women."

12. In an interview on Squidoo.com, Meyer claims, "My vampires do not have fangs. Their teeth are so sharp and strong that fangs are hardly necessary (they could bite through steel, if so inclined—a human neck is like butter, ha ha). The non-vegetarian vampires don't leave living victims (unless they are changing someone into a vampire); this isn't the neat-and-tidy, two-small-holes-in-the-neck kind of vampire attack that you see in other vampire mythologies."

13. A video clip of the garden can be seen on Twilightnewssite.com.

14. In a 2010 interview with Jeff Bayer, Bayer asks Stewart what she had for breakfast, and she answers "Turkey bacon, and not enough of it." And in a January 8, 2011, interview with *Vogue*, Eve MacSweeney notes that Stewart's "friends tease her for watching the Food Network with a stern frown of concentration on her face. 'I'm such a dork.' (The frown pays off. For lunch, she prepares an elaborate, and delicious, Mexican tortilla soup with numerous condiments, along with pulled-pork sandwiches.)"

15. This issue is discussed on *The PETA Files*.

16. Ball's adaptation furthers this discourse, even in its opening montage, which features a church sign emblazoned with the statement "God hates fangs."

17. J. M. Tyree claims that Sookie is "somewhat in the Sarah Michelle Gellar mold (although less kick-ass)" (34).

18. There is, for example, a Facebook group called "Dustin's crusade against Stephenie Meyer's plagiarism of Charlaine Harris."

19. While ostensibly participating in mainstream politics via their activism in the American Vampire League (AVL), vampires also ascribe to a feudal order that recognizes kings and queens of individual states, sheriffs of specific areas, and magistrates who hand down vampire-specific justice, which operates well outside of human conventions.

20. In "Let's Get Out of Here," the ninth episode of season 4, in a dream Sookie propositions both Eric and Bill, who refuse her offer. She says, "First of all, you guys are vampires. What's with all the morality?" Even Sookie, the character with the most to lose if her vampire lovers cease to behave in a "moral" manner, notes the ludicrous possibility of moral vampires.

Chapter 3. Vegan Zombies of the Apocalypse

1. For more information, see Brians.

2. Consider, for example, Danny Boyle's 2002 film *28 Days Later*, Ruben Fleischer's *Zombieland* (2009), Edgar Wright's *Shaun of the Dead* (2004), and the A&E series *The Walking Dead*, which premiered in 2010.

3. *ABC News* ran an article with the title "Zombie Apocalypse: Miami Face-Eating Attack 911 Calls Released" (Newcomb).

4. Newbury considers, for example, Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation*, Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, and Morgan Spurlock's *Super Size Me*, to name a few.

5. "Referent" is Carol J. Adams's term for the way that language is used to remove actual bodies from discussions of the brutalization and consumption of bodies. In Adams's formulation, tricks of language are used to characterize "meat" as distinct from "animals": "Through butchering, animals become absent referents. Animals in name and body are made absent *as animals* for meat to exist" (40).

6. See New Harvest's homepage for more information: http://www.new-harvest.org/default.php.

7. In "*The Handmaid's Tale* and *Oryx and Crake* in Context," Margaret Atwood makes the claim that she is neither a science fiction expert nor an academic but that in *Oryx and Crake* (2003), she writes "speculative fiction" (513). Likewise, *The Year of the Flood* can be categorized in this way.

Chapter 4. Death by Veganism, Veganorexia, and Vegaphobia

1. Their paper addresses Foucault's concept of discourses, "recognizing them as 'structured ways of knowing' which become 'institutionalized practices'" (136).

2. For a summation of Planck's claims, see McDougall. B12 is produced by bacteria, not by animals, but animal foods are the best source of B12. However, it occurs naturally in nutritional yeast as well and can be found in numerous vegan supplements.

3. A Google search on August 31, 2012, for "vegan baby death" pulled over four million hits.

4. See my later discussion of Jerri Gray for the exception.

5. See Lori Moore's chronicling of the Akin affair in her article "Rep. Todd Akin: The Statement and the Reaction." On August 19, 2012, KTVI-TV posted to its website an interview with Todd Akin, Republican representative for Missouri's second congressional district, in which he was asked whether he believes abortion is justified in cases of rape. He replied that rape does not result in pregnancy: "It seems to be, first of all, from what I understand from doctors, it's really rare. If it's a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try to shut the whole thing down."

6. I'm thinking, for example, of films like *Bridesmaids* (2011) and the HBO series *Girls*, which premiered in April 2012.

7. Such female communities as the lesbian/womyn's lands communities of the 1970s, some of which still exist, are a notable exception. For more information, see Kershaw.

8. Pro-ana Nation, House of Thin, and Pretty Thin are among the myriad such sites that promote anorexia. Even as these sites often claim that anorexia is not a disease but a lifestyle choice and even as they offer "thinspiration" in the form of images of superthin women, there is some research to suggest that these sites actually help anorexic women by giving them a nonjudgmental space in which to discuss their issues.

9. The humor site Cracked.com features a "vegan food pyramid," the basis of which is "self-righteousness: an even more important staple than smugness for the vegan; it fuels their ability to pontificate endlessly, even to people who tune them out or tell them to fuck off."

10. See Brumberg's *Fasting Girls*, particularly the first chapter, "Anorexia Nervosa in the 1980s," and chapter 9, "Modern Dieting," for a more comprehensive discussion of this connection.

11. Most of the studies that link eating disorders to vegetarian diets focus on women, primarily young women. Timko, Hormes, and Chubski's study considers 486 respondents between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. Of these, 374 (77 percent) were female, while 111 (23 percent) were male (983).

Chapter 5. Men, Meat, and Hegan Identity

1. Allen lost to Julia Roberts for her portrayal of Erin Brockovich, and Bridges lost to Benicio Del Toro as Javier Rodríguez in *Traffic*.

2. The group toured from 2000 to 2006 and consisted of Larry the Cable Guy, Jeff Foxworthy, Bill Engvall, and Ron White.

3. See Dorson for more information about the presumed illegitimacy of the Bunyan figure as an American folk figure.

4. And Palin identifies as a "carnivore" in her book, indicating that she eats meat and only meat.

5. The Women's Media Center put together a compilation entitled "Sexism Sells—but We're Not Buying It," which features news commentators employing sexist rhetoric to discuss female politicians: http://www.womensmediacenter.com/blog/entry/campaign-update-sexism-sells-but-were-not-buying-it.

6. I have tried without success to find information about the actor who plays this woman.

7. According to Rob Reilly, vice president and creative director for Crispin, Porter, and Bogusky (the advertising agency behind the commercial), despite initial concern that Reddy would not give permission to use her song, "she thought it was funny . . . and once she approved the lyrics, it was like, 'Okay, let's go!'" ("Director Bryan Buckley").

8. Whether or not bras were actually burned is a point of some debate. See Campbell.

9. Postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha writes that mimicry is a kind of double articulation that "appropriates the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both 'normalized' knowledges and disciplinary powers" (86).

10. A *Daily Mail* article published on February 18, 2012, notes that "more than half of births to American women younger than 30 are outside marriage." Most minority and immigrant groups in the United States appear to be losing ground as well. According to a recent report by the American Psychological Association, African American children are three times as likely to live in poverty as their Caucasian counterparts. Furthermore, "unemployment rates for African Americans are typically double those of Caucasian Americans," and African American men who work full time earn only 72 percent of what Caucasian men earn and 85 percent of Caucasian women's earnings. According to the report, Latinos and African Americans are more likely to attend high-poverty schools than either Asian Americans or Caucasians, and "African Americans are at higher risk for involuntary psychiatric commitment than any other racial group." According to the same study, African Americans and Latinos who live in high-poverty areas are more likely to be referred for commitment by law enforcement than other racial groups. According to the U.S. Department of Health

and Human Services, "women account for about one in four new HIV/AIDS cases in the United States," and "of these newly infected women, about two in three are African-American" ("Minority Women's Health"). With regard to Asian Americans, the best socioeconomically situated minority group, native-born Asian American men still make 8 percent less than comparable white men, and "Asian American men who were schooled entirely overseas have substantial earnings disadvantages" (Kim and Sakamoto 934). Despite these setbacks, however, according to the 2010 census report, "roughly 85 percent of both all Asians and all people in the United States 25 and older had at least a high school diploma," and "50 percent of Asian Americans in comparison to 31 percent of the total U.S. population had earned at least a bachelor's degree." In addition, Asian American women have the highest life expectancy of any ethnic group, including whites ("Asian American").

11. Women who have children remain at a disadvantage with regard to employment, as working mothers consistently experience discrimination as a result of having children. As evidence of this reality, a Cornell University study involved researchers who constructed "fake résumés, identical in all respects except parental status. They asked college students to evaluate the fitness of candidates for employment or promotion. Mothers were much less likely to be hired. If hired, they were offered, on average, $11,000 less in starting salary and were much less likely to be deemed deserving of promotion" (Coontz). According to Coontz, the researchers also submitted similar résumés in response to six hundred job advertisements, and childless applicants received two times as many callbacks as those who identified as mothers.

12. But marital rape was only made illegal in some states as late as 1993 ("Marital Rape").

13. That Horton was also a paid advisor for Meat and Livestock Australia (Nath 267) is worth noting.

14. See Rozin et al. for more information about this study.

15. For more on this discourse, see Ruby and Heine 448.

16. Bill Clinton was inducted into the Alpha Phi Omega fraternity when he was a student at Georgetown University.

Chapter 6. The Celebrity Vegan Project

1. The 2011 winners were Kristen Wiig and Russell Brand.

2. The cover of Carol J. Adams's *The Sexual Politics of Meat* features a vintage drawing of a woman likewise quartered and labeled.

3. Other women featured in PETA's various ad campaigns include Holly Madison, a *Playboy* bunny who has surgically altered nearly every aspect of her body, ex–Calvin Klein model Christy Turlington, and porn star Jenna Jameson.

4. An Internet search for the ad in 2014 pulled up numerous articles about how it promotes violence against women. Rheana Murray's article "Does This PETA Ad Promote Violence?" in the *New York Daily News* covers the debate that the ad generated.

5. Our tolerance for violence seems increasingly obvious in the wake of such incidents as the shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2012 and the multitude of similar incidents since then (see Fantz, Knight, and Wang for a comprehensive list of similar incidents since 2012), given the lack of substantive gun regulation thereafter (see Stein and Wilkes for more information).

6. For comprehensive coverage of the ways that the media rendered Tyson an animal during and after his rape trial, see Lule.

7. Tyson apologized to Holyfield in 2009, and Holyfield accepted. And fifteen years after the incident, Tyson helped to promote Holyfield's barbeque sauce by tweeting "@Holyfield's ear would've been much better with his new BBQ sauce."

8. Since his loss on *Top Chef Masters*, Smith has lost 120 pounds after being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. He has reversed his diagnosis through diet and exercise, noting, ""My weight loss was through a diet that was 95 percent vegetarian" ("Healthy Habits").

9. In response to being asked by Misenhammer@joysarita, "Look, the Internet is very back and forth about you being a vegan. I'm just so damn curious," Wood tweeted, "No, not a vegan." https://twitter.com/woodelijah/status/202444213936340992.

10. In October 2011 the two were rumored to be working to open a vegan restaurant in Hollywood, but as of July 2012 those plans had fallen through (D'Estries).

11. According to Eliza Barclay, "110 new meat substitute products were introduced in 2010 and 2011. And according to SymphonyIRI Group, a market research firm, frozen meat substitute sales reached $267 million in 2011."

12. There has been some recent speculation that Cover Girl has "dropped" DeGeneres as a spokesperson, but I am unable to substantiate the veracity of that claim.

13. The animal-welfare argument seems easier to digest; see Michael Pollan's locavore stance and his writing about Joel Salatin's Polyface farm. For more information, see Pollan's essay "An Animal's Place."

Conclusion. National and Personal Narratives

1. The book was first released in 2010.

2. For example, an article in *Medical Daily* is titled "How Veganism Led Blogger, Jordan Younger, to Develop Eating Disorder Orthorexia: 3 Steps to Prevent Obsession," and an article in *Women's Health* is called "How Going Vegan Triggered This Instagram Star's Orthorexia."

3. That I am a middle-class white woman, of course, means that I am a member of the largest vegan demographic there is. The material that I include here with regard to my own experiences appears in a slightly different form as "Disordered Pronouns, Disordered Eating."

4. Actually, this statement is not remotely true: "For centuries the universal pronoun was *they*. Writers as far back as Chaucer used it for singular and plural, masculine and feminine" (O'Connor and Kellerman).

5. The court transcript of the Schiffman murder case can be found here: http://www.aoc.state.nc.us/www/public/sc/slip/slip96/207-94-1.html.

6. Here's the answer as it appears in a 2009 *New York Times* editorial by Patricia T. O'Conner and Stewart Kellerman, authors of *Origins of the Specious: Myths and Misconceptions of the English Language*: "If any single person is responsible for this male-centric usage, it's Anne Fisher, an 18th-century British schoolmistress and the first woman to write an English grammar book. . . . Fisher's popular guide, *A New Grammar* (1745), ran to more than 30 editions, making it one of the most successful grammars of its time. More important, it's believed to be the first to say that the pronoun *he* should apply to both sexes."

7. There is really no right solution to this universal pronoun business, but there are lots of ways to play with the reclamation of language and, therefore, of identity. Using "they" is one way; alternating between "he" and "she" another. Creating

one's own gender-neutral pronoun—"shhe"?—is an option. But I decided that I liked using "she" because doing so was jarring, a kind of Brechtian alienation effect. Brecht claims that "a representation that alienates . . . allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar. The classical and medieval theatre alienated its characters by making them wear human or animal masks" (192). "She" masked the universalizing "he" in my lexicon; I used it in a way that was recognizable but unfamiliar. Doing so called the "he" into account, and that was the idea.

8. See Herzog, "Eating Disorders," at http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/animals-and-us/201009/eating-disorders-the-dark-side-vegetarianism.

9. The transcript of Leigh Wallace Cooper's 2010 Oxygen Channel interview about her abduction and rape can be found at http://www.livedash.com/transcript/captured-(kidnapped)/8568/OXYGENP/Monday_January_11_2010/162634/.

10. I've written about this decision here: http://veganbodyproject.blogspot.com/2011/09/september-11-and-veganism.html.

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INDEX

Abbate, Cheryl E., 156
Abrams, Joseph, 41
Abu Ghraib prison scandal, 38
Adam, Mike, 94–95
Adams, Bryan, 135
Adams, Carol J., xi–xvii, 16–21, 24, 35, 173; on absent referents, 19, 137, 169, 178n5; on class distinctions, 176n3; on "feminized protein," xi, 50, 126; Gilligan and, 64; on "heganism," xii, 46, 109–10, 114–15, 126; on PETA, xii, 137, 138; Stavick and, 43
Adorno, Theodor, xv
Affleck, Casey, 135
Afghanistan war, 29
AIDS, 58, 180n10
Akin, Todd, 89, 178n5
Alabaster, Oliver, 35
Alcott, William, 33
Alexander the Great, 3
Allen, Joan, 110–13, 127–28
Al-Qaeda, 36, 37
American diet, 42, 94–95, 101, 117; Adams on, 109–10; comfort food in, 38–39; food pyramid and, 35, 176n5, 178n9
Anatol, Giselle Liza, 52
Anderson, Hephzibah, 83
Anderson, Pamela, xii, 132, 135–40
Anderson, Will, 23
Angel (TV series), 48
animal rights, 33–35, 38, 63, 131–32, 165; animal welfare versus, 2, 175n2; Derrida on, 12, 16, 18; ecofeminism and, 9–19, 38, 137, 138; "ethical consumption" and, 4, 151–52; "heganism" and, 128, 156; speciesism and, 11–12, 18, 32, 91; terrorism and, 41
animal studies, 2, 11–20, 38, 175n3
Animals and Society Institute, 13
anorexia nervosa, 89–90, 96–106, 159, 166–68; websites on, 98, 178n8. *See also* eating disorders
apocalyptic narratives, xii, 68–88
Apple, Fiona, 135, 139
Asian cuisine, 3, 35, 109
Atchison, Todd, 44
Atkins-Sayre, Wendy, 136
Atwood, Margaret, 68, 178n7
—works of: *Oryx and Crake*, 70, 78–85, 87; *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, 81–82; *Year of the Flood*, 70–71, 77, 79, 83–88
Auerbach, Nina, 45
Avramescu, Cătălin, 75

Babe (film), 36
Ball, Alan, 57, 58. See also *True Blood*
Barclay, Eliza, 181n11
Barnard, Neal, 35
Barnouin, Kim, 104–5, 149
Barnum, P. T., 96
Barton, Clara, 34
Baudrillard, Jean, xv
Bayless, Rick, 146
Beard, James, 109
Behn, Aphra, 29
Bell, Kristen, 135
Benjamin, Walter, 30, 37
Bergdahl, Bowe, 154
Bergthaller, Hannes, 86
Bhabha, Homi K., 179n9
Bible, 3–4, 78
Bishop, Steven, 172
Bittman, Mark, 94, 156
Blayde, Ariadne, 62, 66
Boko Haram, 154
Boreanaz, David, 47, 48
Bosco, Mark, 71

Bourdain, Anthony, 39–41, 149, 176n9
Bové, Paul, 31
Boyle, Danny, 70
Bradley, Timothy, 141
Brand, Russell, 134, 135
Bratman, Steven, 157
Brazier, Brendan, 21, 142
breastfeeding, 89, 90, 92, 95, 135, 147
Brecht, Bertolt, 182n7
Brougham, Henry, 3, 21
Brown, Mike, 158
Brown, Sarah E., 136–37
Brumberg, Joan Jacobs, 96–98, 102
Bryan, Daniel, 141
Buckley, Bryan, 119
Buddhism, 3, 4
Buell, Lawrence, 18, 68
Buerkle, C. Wesley, 108, 110, 118–19
Buffy the Vampire Slayer (TV series), 44–51, 66–67; *Twilight* saga versus, 47, 52, 53, 56
bulimia, 98, 159–62. *See also* eating disorders
Burkitt, Denis, 35
Bush, George W., xiv, 18–19, 36–37, 41–42, 175n1

Calabrasi, Massimo, 154
Campbell, T. Colin, 35
cannibalism, 69–78, 80, 84–88
Caplan, Lizzy, 59, 65
Carey, Jason, 144
Carpenter, Charisma, 49
Carroll, James, 175n1
Cartesianism, 11, 12, 14, 65
Cashmore, Ellis, 143
Cavalieri, Paola, 12
celebrity vegans, 27, 127–28, 130–53, 155
Chalupa, Andrea, 66
Chastain, Jessica, 135
Chernin, Kim, 97
Cherry, Elizabeth, 31
Chiarello, Michael, 146
child abuse/neglect, 90–94
Chubski, Janice, 102–4
Clingman, Stephen, 29
Clinton, Bill, 110–11, 113, 127–28, 150
Clinton, Chelsea, 116
Clinton, Hillary Rodham, 113, 115–16, 121
Coetzee, J. M., 172–73
Coffin, Ed, 158
Colb, Sherri F., 95
Cole, Matthew, 32, 90–91, 99–100, 105–6
Collins, Suzanne, 84
comic book superheroes, xii, 44, 49
Conrad, Joseph, 175n5
Contender, The (film), 36, 110–15, 127–28
Coontz, Stephanie, xvii, 122–23, 180n11
Copernicus, Nicolaus, 14
Couric, Katie, 116, 149
Cover Girl cosmetics, 132, 150–51, 181n12
Crab, Roger, 3–4
Crisp, Arthur, 97, 98, 100
Cromwell, James, 36
Curtin, Deane, 15–16
cyborgs, 14

dairy products, xi, 50, 126
Damani, Sadhana, 98
Dangarembga, Tsitsi, 172
Danzig, Mac, 22, 132, 141–42, 144
Darfur, 122
Darwin, Charles, 3, 14
Davis, Michelle, 158
de Rossi, Portia, 134, 150
DeGeneres, Ellen, 134, 135, 144, 149; Cover Girl cosmetics and, 132, 150–51, 181n12
DeMello, Margo, 12–13
Denton, Anne, 33–34
Derrida, Jacques, 12, 16, 18
Deschanel, Emily, 96, 147
Deschanel, Zooey, 146–47, 149
Detroit water crisis, 155
diabetes mellitus, 8, 94, 181n8
Dickson, Akeya, 158
Dinshaw, H. Jay, 34
domestic abuse/violence, 93–94, 122, 123, 140, 169, 172, 177n11
Donnelly, Brian, 72, 74–75
Donovan, Josephine, 64
Dowd, Maureen, 127
Dunn, George A., 62, 66

Earthlings (film), 149–50
Eating Animals (Foer), 23, 96, 147, 161
eating disorders, 171; anorexia as, 89–90, 96–106, 166–68; bulimia as,

98, 159–62; Dangarembga on, 172; orthorexia as, 156–57, 159; Tedrow on, 162–64
ecofeminism, 2, 35, 171–72; animal rights and, 9–19, 38, 137, 138; definitions of, 17; Denton on, 34; ethical concerns of, 45–46, 64; queer, 9–10
Eisenberg, Zoe, 155
England, Lynndie, 38
environmentalism, 35, 68–69. *See also* ecofeminism
Esselstyn, Rip, 126
ethical concerns, 3–18, 151–52; of cannibalism, 75, 76; of ecofeminism, 45–46, 64; of vampires, 48, 56, 62, 64–66, 177nn19–20
Eugene, Rudy, 69

Faludi, Susan, xii, 115
Fancher, Mollie, 96
Farrell, John A., 116
fast-food restaurants, 39, 51, 116–21, 123, 155
Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), 40–42
feminism. *See* ecofeminism
Ferris, Kerry O., 130
Fey, Tina, 116
fibroids, 8
Fisak, B., 100–101
Fisher, Anne, 181n6
Fleischer, Richard, 51
Fleischer, Ruben, 70
Flint, David, 69
Foer, Jonathan Safran, 23, 96, 147, 161
food pyramid, 35, 176n5, 178n9
Ford, Bill, 127
Forks over Knives (film), 142
Foster, Arian, 141
Foucault, Michel, 125, 178n1
Fraiman, Susan, 18
Freston, Kathy, 132, 151–52
Freud, Sigmund, 14, 43
Friedan, Betty, 123
Friedman, Rory, 104–5, 149
Fromm, Harold, 19–21, 149
Fulkerson, Lee, 142

Gaard, Greta, 9–10, 17–18
Gallagher, Brian, 38–39
Gamson, Joshua, 130
Garner, Eric, 158
Garrard, Greg, 17–18
Gellar, Sarah Michelle, 46–47, 58
gender roles, 31, 64–65; body image and, 108, 135–38, 156, 165, 166; class distinctions and, 176n3; politicians and, 179n5; pronouns and, 168–70; in vampire narratives, 46–47, 53–54. *See also* ecofeminism
Giacobbe, Alyssa, 141
Gilligan, Carol, 64
Giuliani, Rudy, xii
Gleeson, Brendon, 70
Glotfelty, Cheryll, 20
Gonzalez, Tony, 126, 134
Goodwin, Ginnifer, 135, 148
Gordon, Joan, 45
Gore, Al, 113
Gorgan, Elena, 147
Gowers, Simon, 98, 100
Graham, Sylvester, 33, 34
Gray, Jeni, 172
Greene, Gael, 146
Gregory, Dick, 8
Gruen, Lori, 15
Guantánamo Bay prison, 38, 154
Gwinner, Donovan, 72, 75

Hallab, Mary Y., 43, 45
Haraway, Donna, 13–14, 44
Hardwicke, Catherine, 55–57
Harper, A. Breeze, 23, 104–5; on race and veganism, 8–10, 31, 143, 158, 175n2
Harrelson, Woody, 70, 135, 149
Harris, Charlaine, 44–45, 57–58, 177n18. See also *True Blood*
Harris, Scott R., 130
Hartmann, Margaret, 91–92
Hediger, Ryan, 13
"heganism," 22, 26, 107–29, 155–56; Adams on, xii, 46, 109–10, 114–15, 126; athletes and, 31, 140–42, 144–45, 156; definitions of, 126; hegemonic, 124–29. *See also* veganism
Heine, Steven J., 108, 110

Herzog, Hal, 23, 99, 100, 104, 171
Hillcoat, John, 72
Hilton, Paris, 130
Hinduism, 4, 109, 121
HIV disease, 58, 180n10
Hoberman, J., 111–12
Hogan, Sam, 116
Hollinger, Veronica, 45
Holloway, Matt, 158
Holocaust, 29, 173
Holyfield, Evander, 142, 143, 181n7
homosexuality, 9–10, 17, 31, 145; "metrosexuality" and, 110; same-sex marriage and, 168; in vampire narratives, 43, 49, 59–60
Hormes, Julia M., 102–4
Horton, Mark, 124, 180n13
Housel, Rebecca, 44
Howard, Bryce Dallas, 147
Huckabee, Mike, 38
human-animal studies, 13
humanism, 20–21; posthumanism and, 13–14, 38, 44

Iacobbo, Karen and Michael, 8, 22, 32–35, 176n4
Indian cuisine, 3, 109, 121
infant formula, 95
infant mortality, 89, 91–95, 100
Iraq war, 29, 39, 68–69, 154

Jackson, Andrew, 33
Jeltsen, Melissa, 99
Jett, Joan, 139, 148
Johns, Laurie, 151
Johnson, Caleb, 35
Johnson, Kjerstin, 156
Jolie, Angelina, 133, 148
jones, pattrice, 158
Joseph, John, 155–56, 159
Joy, Melanie, 23, 109
Jurek, Scott, 141

Kadambari, Rao, 98, 100
Kaiser, Kenny, 172
Kane-Alves, Vanessa, 99
Kapurch, Katie, 57
Kardashian, Kim, 130
Kazez, Jean, 54–55
Keller, Hubert, 146
Kellman, Steven G., 115
Kermode, Frank, 68
Kheel, Mari, 138
Kirschner, Andrew, 151–52
Knight, John, 13
Kollin, Susan, 71
Kucinich, Dennis, 4, 115, 127, 135
Kunsa, Ashley, 72
Kushner, Jordan, 41
Kwanten, Ryan, 58–59, 65

Lakshmi, Padma, 117, 120–21
Lane, Charles, 33
Laraque, Georges, 139
Last Chance for Animals (LCA), 145, 146
Lee, Daniel Brian, 172
Levine, Elana, 47
Lewinski, John Scott, 177n11
Lewinski, Monica, 111, 113, 127–28
Lewis, Carl, 134
Lewis, Jason, 41
Lewis, Lennox, 145
Lindeman, Maria, 99
Ling, Lisa, 151
Linzey, Andrew, 8
Lo, Anita, 146
Luks, Joel, 133
Lule, Jack, 143
Lurie, Lucy, 173
Lurie, Rod, 36, 110–13, 127–28
Lutz, William D., 36
Lyman, Howard, 23, 36

Maguire, Toby, 148
Marcus, Erik, 23
Margulies, Joseph, 154
Marshall, P. David, 130
Marsters, James, 47, 48
Martin, David S., 127
Martin, Roberto, 150
Martin, Trayvon, 158
Mathews, Dan, 136, 138
McCain, Joe, 125
McCain, John, 116
McCance, Dawne, 11
McCarthy, Cormac, 70–77, 79, 88
McClelland, Bruce A., 59, 60
McDonald, Barbara, 6–7, 22, 32
McHugh, Susan, 81
McKay, Robert, 81, 82

Melnick, Jeffrey, 30
Merriman, Ben, 102
Metcalf, William, 33
"metrosexuality," 110
Meyer, Stephenie, 44–45, 52–58, 177n12; possible plagiarism by, 58, 177n18. See also *Twilight* saga
Microsanctuary Movement, 166
mind/body dualism, 11, 12, 14, 65
Monsanto Corporation, 15
Monson, Shaun, 149
Morgan, Karen, 32, 90–91, 99–100, 105–6
Morgan, Robin, xiv
Morissette, Alanis, 135
Morr, Jacqueline J., 160–62
Morris, Jim, 128
Morrissey (musician), 55
Münter, Leilani, 141
Muslims, hate crimes against, 37–38, 40, 176n10
Mutch, Deborah, 44–45

Nath, Jemál, 124, 125
National Rifle Association, 115
Nealon, Kevin, 140
Newbury, Michael, 70
Newkirk, Ingrid, 34–35, 127, 131, 138
Nigeria, 154
Night of the Living Dead (film), 69, 71
9/11. *See* September 11 attacks
Noonan, Chris, 36
Noveck, Jocelyn, 133–34
nuclear weapons, 68–69

Obama, Barack, 127, 154
Oliver, Mary, 162
Olsen, Hanna Brooks, 150
Ornish, Dean, 35
orthorexia, 156–57, 159. *See also* eating disorders
Oryx and Crake (Atwood), 70, 78–85, 87
Osbourne, Ozzy, 134
Owen, A. Susan, 46–47

Pacheco, Alex, 34
Palin, Sarah, 115, 116, 121
Paquin, Anna, 58
Parke, Maggie, 44
Parry, Jovian, 82, 124–25
Pasley, Jeffrey C., 48, 49
Patalsky, Kathy, 105
Patriot Act, 36–37
Pattinson, Robert, 55
Payne-Knoper, Michelle, 39
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), 22, 127, 150, 155, 165; celebrity endorsements of, xii, 131–32, 135–41, 156; founding of, 34–35; sexiest vegetarian award of, 135, 139
Phillips, Dana, 76
Phoenix, Joaquin, 135, 139, 149
Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, 35
Pierce, Kathleen, 125
pigeons, 145–46
Pitt, Brad, 134, 135
Planck, Nina, 91–92, 100
Polidori, John William, 45
Pollan, Michael, 151–52, 178n4, 181n13
pornography, xv–xvi, 58, 89, 117, 140
Portman, Natalie, 96, 135, 147–48
posthumanism, 13–14, 38, 44
Potts, Annie, 124–25
pregnancy, 31, 91–92, 95–96, 147–48
Prilosec advertisement, 113–14, 119
Putin, Vladimir, 89
Pythagoras, 3–5

Queen Afua (holistic healer), 8
queer ecofeminism, 9–10
Quick, David, 126

race, 17, 109, 145; advertising and, 117, 120; class and, 176n3, 179n10; veganism and, 8–10, 31, 143, 158, 175n2
Rajt, Lindsay, 140
rape, 89, 104, 143, 172, 178n5
Rastafarians, 23
Rayner, Jay, 146
Reddy, Helen, 116, 117, 179n7
Redfield, Marc, 30, 33, 37
Regan, Tom, 11, 16
Renan, Ernest, 30
Rice, Anne, 45, 48, 52, 57
Ritson, Joseph, 3, 21
Road, The (McCarthy), 70–77, 79, 88
Robb, Douglas, 152

Robbins, John, 23, 35
Robinson, Eugene, 154
Rodman, Dennis, 139
Rogers, Richard, 118
Romero, George A., 69, 71
Romney, Mitt, 127
Ronnen, Tal, 134
Root, Stephen, 59, 65
Rosin, Hanna, 122
Ruby, Matthew B., 108, 110
Rushdie, Salman, 121
Rutz, Jim, 31

San Diego, Daniel Andreas, 41, 141
Sax, Leonard, 53
Schevitz, Tanya, 37
Schiffman, Nan, 172
Schlesinger, Robert, 176n8
Schwarzenegger, Arnold, 128
Scott Pilgrim vs. the World (film), 107–8
September 11 attacks (2001), xii–xiv, 18–19, 115; vampire narratives after, 44; veganism after, 28–42, 174
Seventh Day Adventists, 23, 34
sexist language, 168–70, 181nn6–7
Sexual Politics of Meat, The. *See* Adams, Carol J.
Shaberman, Ben, 23
Silverstone, Alicia, 96, 135, 139
Simpsons (TV series), 5–6
Sinclair, Upton, 34
Singer, Peter, 11–12, 18
Smith, Art, 146, 147
Smit-McPhee, Kody, 72
Snyders, Matt, 40–41
Sontag, Susan, xiv–xv
Soylent Green (film), 51
speciesism, 11–12, 18, 32, 91. *See also* animal rights
Spencer, Colin, 3–5
Stahler, Charles, 134
Standard American Diet. *See* American diet
Stavick, J. E. D., 43–44
Steiner, Gary, 175n4
Stephaniak, Joanne, 23
Stevens, Dana, 53, 55
Stevens, Kathy, 5
Stewart, Kristen, 53, 55, 58, 148, 177n14
Stoker, Bram, 43–45, 48, 66
Stone, Biz, 127
Stuart, Tristam, 2–4, 31
Sudan, 122
Suddath, Claire, 32, 33
Sullivan, Victoria, 98
Summers, Sarah, 53
Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature (Atwood), 81–82
Swart, Sandra, 13

Tatchell, Peter, 145
Tavernise, Sabrina, 122
Taylor, Nik, 13
Tea Party movement, 37
Tedrow, Melissa, 162–64
Terry, Bryant, 158
Thoreau, Henry David, 4
Timko, C. Alix, 102–4
Torres, Rob, 23
Toscano, Margaret M., 53
True Blood (TV series), 44, 45, 57–67, 131; animal/human binary in, 63; *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and, 47; homosexuality in, 59–60; *Twilight* saga and, 47, 58; veganism in, 60–61, 63, 66, 152
Turner, Graeme, 130
Twain, Mark, 144
28 Days Later (film), 70, 72
Twigg, Julia, 43
Twilight saga (Meyer), 44–47, 52–57, 66–67, 131
Tyree, J. M., 45, 58–59
Tyron, Thomas, 3–4
Tyson, Mike, 22, 31, 127, 132, 134, 142–46

Ultimate Fighter (TV series), 141
Underwood, Carrie, 133
Undisputed Truth (Broadway show), 144–45

Valenti, Jessica, 122
vampires, xii, 43–67; ethical concerns of, 48, 56, 62, 64–66, 177nn19–20; gender roles and, 46–47, 53–54; homosexual, 43, 49, 59–60; "vegan," 44–47, 58–67, 131, 158; "vegetarian," 1, 46–47, 51, 54–56, 66–67; zombies and, 69
Van Kleeck, Justin, 166–68

Varo Urango, Remedios, 1
vegan identity, 6–10, 22–26, 89–90, 105; Bourdain on, 39–40; Fromm on, 19–20; after 9/11, 28–42, 46, 174
Vegan Society, 2, 4, 34
vegan studies, xvii, 1–24, 30–31, 154–60
veganism, 146–53; animal-rights movement and, 33–35; athletes and, 140–42, 144–45, 156; celebrity endorsements of, 27, 127–28, 130–53, 155; definitions of, 2, 3, 21, 32, 103; demographics of, 22, 32; history of, 3–6, 30–36; orthorexia and, 157; "pseudo," 9, 152; race and, 8–10, 31, 143, 158, 175n2; supposed infant deaths from, 89, 91–95, 100; in vampire narratives, 44–47, 58–67, 131, 152, 158; website of, 21–22. *See also* "heganism"
"veganorexia," 96–102
"vegansexuality," 124–25
"vegaphobia," 90–91, 99–100, 105–6
Vegetarian Resource Group, 134
Vegetarian Society, 2, 33
vegetarianism, 32–35, 54, 62; definitions of, 102–3, 173; etymology of, 32; history of, 2–4, 33–34; "restrictive," 90, 121; "severe," 98, 100; types of, 101–4; in vampire narratives, 1, 46–47, 54–56, 66–67
video games, 46
Virginia Tech shootings (2007), 29
vitamin B12 deficiency, 31, 91, 92, 147, 178n2
voodoo, 69. *See also* zombies

Waka Flocka Flame, 139
Wallace, Kelsey, 137
Wallace, Leigh Cooper, 172
War on Terror, 18–19, 30–33, 36–37, 42, 154
Warkentin, Traci, 15, 16
Washington, Desiree, 143
water crisis in Detroit, 155
Watson, Donald, 4, 32, 33
Weil, Kari, 15
Weinman, Jamie J., 58
Weiss, Catherine, 155
Welch, Michael, 31, 37
werewolves, 53, 54, 58
Whedon, Joss, 44, 46, 51. See also *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*
White, Ellen G., 34
Whole Foods stores, 152
Wilde, Olivia, 135
Williams, Mark, 37–38
Williams, Mary Elizabeth, 95–96
Williams, Saul, 139
Williamson, Milly, 45
Wilson, Natalie, 44
Winfrey, Oprah, 36, 132, 134, 149, 151–52
Wolf, Naomi, 89–90
Wolfe, Cary, 13–14, 16, 44
Wood, Elijah, 148
Woodhull, Victoria, 34
Wrenn, Corey, 164–65
Wright, Edgar, 107–8
Wynn, Steve, 127, 132, 134

Year of the Flood (Atwood), 70–71, 77, 79, 83–88
Younger, Jordan, 156–57

Zephaniah, Benjamin, 23
zombies, xii, 50, 69–71, 74–75, 84, 87–88